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1868
YEAR OF THE
UNIONS

A
Documentary
Survey

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Edited, with an introduction and notes
by
Edmund Frow & Michael Katanka

MICHAEL KATANKA (BOOKS) LTD
LONDON

Published by
MICHAEL KATANKA (BOOKS) LTD
160, Edgwarebury Lane, Edgware, Middx., England

First published 1968

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*This book has been set in Baskerville, printed in Great Britain
on Antique Wove paper by Anchor Press, and
bound by Wm. Brendon, both of Tiptree, Essex*

To
BEATRICE and RUTH

187398

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Introduction

Today we can look back on 1868 as the Year of the Unions, yet the first Trades Union Congress, held in Manchester in that year, caused hardly a ripple on the surface of British politics. Some of the most important trades union leaders of the time did not trouble to attend. Some even opposed it. Historians have largely ignored it. Even the Webbs in their *History of Trade Unionism* dismiss the first T.U.C. in a footnote. Yet we can see it today as a great landmark in the history of the organised working-class movement.

This first national trade union meeting, attended by thirty-four delegates representing about 118,000 trades unionists, was intended as a reminder to the employers and the Government that the workers were organising to demand a greater share in the wealth created by their efforts. For by 1868 Britain had become the workshop of the world. It was the heyday of British capitalism. In 1860, Britain was already producing 83 million tons of coal from a world production of 145 million tons. By 1870 it was 111 million tons out of a world production of 217 million tons.

Although the standard of living of the British workers had improved by the 1860's compared with previous decades, they by no means considered they had their rightful share of the general prosperity. Working conditions were bad, wages were low and hours were long. The *Report of the Children's Employment Commission of 1862* vividly exposed conditions in a wide range of industries. Both men and women were equally cruelly exploited.

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John Hammons, age 17, employed at Messrs. John Mitchell's Steel Pen Factory, Newhall St., Birmingham.—I riddle pans at the mouth of the muffle (oven) ready for the man to push in. Our proper work time, i.e. for the man and me, who are all that work in this place, is from 8 a.m. till 7.30 p.m., but now I work from 7 a.m. till 9.30 or 10 p.m. and have done so for a tidy bit now. . . .¹

Sir, I have been a lace warehouse girl about 13 years . . . children and young women are kept there at work from 8 in the morning to 7, 8 and 9 o'clock at night, for about 3/6d. to 8/— per week. . . .²

An élite of skilled workers was able to wage a successful struggle to improve wages and conditions and achieved, by 1867, an average wage of 50/— a week. Unskilled and agricultural workers received an average of 24/10d.—a differential of over 100%.³ This position was regarded as eminently satisfactory by the Government and other spokesmen of the time who wrote frequently about the great progress being made by the working classes. Working men, however, thought differently. Writing in *The Nineteenth Century* in 1884 (p. 635), James G. Hutchinson, a working man, stated that ' . . . whatever advance there has been in wages has been met by the increased cost of living, house rent and coals, so that the workman is left now, practically, where he was in the days of Adam Smith—he is just about able to live by his labour, and that is all . . . what were the luxuries of one generation have become the necessities of the next.'

The skilled engineer worked a 57 to 60 hour week. Starting time was 6 a.m. with half an hour for breakfast, one hour for dinner and a further half hour for tea. Normal knocking off time was 6 or 7 p.m. With overtime this continued until 8 or 9 p.m.⁴ Thomas Wright, as *The Journeyman Engineer*, wrote:

¹ Third Report of the Children's Employment Commission, 1862.

² First Report of the Children's Employment Commission, 1862, p. 243.

³ Bowley, A. L., *Wages in the U.K. in the 19th Century*, 1900, p. 65.

⁴ Jefferys, J. B., *Story of the Engineers*, 1948, p. 62.

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This is the direful position—the position of ‘infinite injustice’ in which millions of toilers feel themselves as a body to be. The lot of a considerable proportion of them is literally to ‘live miserably and die slowly all their life long’, while the others know that they are barely above such a lot; and that a very slight turn of fortune’s wheel—a new invention, a commercial crisis, a passing failure of health and strength, or anything in the exigencies of a chronically overstocked labour market—may at any time reduce them to it. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at that they should account themselves an aggrieved, a ‘down trodden’ class, that in almost every point of the present constitution of society they should see some especial wrong to them.¹

With the Chartist movement in decline, the working class turned to trade unionism as their main means of economic struggle. It was unionism of a new type—business-like, practical, well organised, in direct contrast to the revolutionary but poorly organised unions of the twenties and thirties. As early as 1844, the newly-formed Miners’ Association of Great Britain appointed a full-time Solicitor at £1,000 per year. In 1850, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was formed, with a Head Office in London and a full-time General Secretary. Their example was followed by the Carpenters, Iron-founders, Bricklayers, Shoemakers and others. The secretaries of these amalgamated societies constituted a self-appointed leadership of the unions which the Webbs called *the Junta*² and described as ‘almost . . . a cabinet of the Trade Union movement’.

Subsequent research, particularly by G. D. H. Cole³ has somewhat modified the Webbs’ description. The Junta was now seen as representative only of that section of the workers whom the Chartist leaders referred to as ‘the pompous trades and proud mechanics’. Other important groups such as the cotton

¹ Wright, T., *Our New Masters*, 1873, p. 143.

² The Junta consisted of Wm. Allan (Engineers), R. Applegarth (Carpenters), D. Guile (Ironfounders), E. Coulson (London Bricklayers) and G. Odger (Shoemakers).

³ In Carus-Wilson (Editor), *Essays in Economic History*, Vol. 3, 1962, pp. 202–10.

workers, the miners and the iron and steel workers developed their trade unions along different lines. The amalgamated societies covered only part of the total trade union membership. Their policies were not typical of all the unions and the Junta did not exercise control over the whole trade union movement. Their influence was confined to those workers who had been elevated to a superior position in the working-class world due to the need for highly skilled men to build and maintain increasingly complex machinery.

The leaders of the new unions were in favour of social peace and a pacific policy but the rank and file were not always willing to accept their advice. As a result many militant struggles took place.

In the engineering industry, the vexed questions of the abolition of overtime and piece-work led to the Executive Council of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers calling for a ban 'by all engineers, machinists, millwrights, smiths and pattern makers' on systematic overtime and piece-work.¹ The union had thought that the strength of their organisation would force the issue. The employers, however, had laid their plans and when the men put their demands, locked them out, some for three months, others for as long as five. The men were defeated and had to return to work after signing the notorious 'Document'.² The complacency of the A.S.E. leaders was considerably shaken. The men signed but considered themselves free to continue to build their union because they had signed under duress. A period of comparative industrial peace followed while the union continued to grow and consolidate its position.

In 1871, the engineers in Gateshead and Newcastle entered upon a strike to obtain a nine-hour day. Despite the efforts of their Executive Council to compromise, the men persisted and won their demand after a strike lasting nearly five months. This victory led to engineers and other trades throughout the country putting similar demands and the movement rapidly spread.³

In 1853, the cotton workers in Preston put in for a wage in-

¹ Jefferys, J. B., *Story of the Engineers*, 1948, p. 36.

² *Ibid.*, p. 40.

³ Burnett, J., *History of the Engineers' Strike in Newcastle and Gateshead*.

crease and were locked out or on strike for thirty weeks. Twenty thousand workers were involved in this struggle which ended in a defeat.¹ The Padiham weavers struck for twenty-nine weeks in 1859 and in the following year there were frequent local strikes of the textile workers.

The miners were organised in two unions, the Amalgamated Association of Miners led by Thomas Halliday and the National Miners Union led by Alexander Macdonald. These unions led a series of strikes in the 1860's often of a protracted and bitter character. Four people were killed and twenty-six wounded when troops fired on a miners' demonstration in North Wales in 1867.²

Despite the sectional character of the struggles of the 1850's and the 1860's, the power of the movement as a whole was developing. This was best seen in the snowball effect of the London builders' strikes and lock-outs of 1859-62. The ten-hour day had been obtained in 1834. By 1857, the situation had developed to the stage where a further demand was made for a nine-hour day. As early as 1853, the London building workers had started agitation to reduce the working day. In 1857 there was a trade recession which led to unemployment. In the following year the builders set up a joint committee of five building trades which became known as 'The Conference of the United Building Trades'. The leading member was George Potter of the Progressive Society of Carpenters and Joiners. When negotiations with the employers broke down in the middle of 1859, the Master Builders' Association closed down the establishments of its members and 24,000 men were thrown out of work. The Master Builders tried to break the unions and applied to the Home Secretary for government support. Although this was not forthcoming, the unions were aroused to the dangers. It was clear that the very principles of combination were being attacked. Response was immediate. During a protracted struggle, financial and other help came from many parts of the country. The A.S.E. donated three thousand pounds. One of the results of the struggle was the formation in 1860 of the London Trades Council.

¹ Ashworth, H., *The Preston Strike*.

² Hutt, A., *British Trade Unionism—A Short History*, 1962.

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The nine-hour day was not won but *The Document* was withdrawn,¹ and the builders' efforts were to have important repercussions throughout the trade union movement in the following decades. The unity born in action developed the understanding of the need for a powerful, well-organised and national trade union movement.

Although fully occupied with day-to-day industrial action, the leaders of the new unions also found time to participate in the growing international movement. When the International Working Men's Association was formed at a crowded meeting at St. Martin's Hall, Long Acre, on the 28th September 1864, with Karl Marx seated on the platform, George Odger, Secretary of the London Trades Council and a member of the Junta, was the main British speaker. The meeting decided to form an International Association and elect a General Council upon which prominent British trade unionists served including Robert Applegarth, secretary of the Carpenters and Edwin Coulson of the London Bricklayers.

Despite the difficulties which the Association experienced, there were by 1870 forty-eight affiliated trade unions including the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners and the Society of Malleable Iron Workers led by John Kane. The London Trades Council had a working agreement with the Association and the 1869 T.U.C. declared its support. The influence that the International Working Men's Association had during the period of the formation of the Trades Union Congress was considerable and **roots of internationalism were planted which have borne fruit at intervals ever since.**²

Beyond industrial action, the main attention of the trade unions was turned to the question of their representation in Parliament. The spirit of Chartism, which had never completely expired, in 1867 flared once again into brilliant life. In many parts of the country, alliances of the middle and working classes formed associations for an extension of the franchise and a moderate programme of parliamentary reform. In London, the Trades Council set up a Trade Union Political Union as

¹ Postgate, R. W., *The Builders' History*, 1923, pp. 167-179.

² Collins and Abramsky, *Karl Marx & The British Labour Movement*, 1965, *passim*.

early as 1862 on which the members of the Junta played an active part. When a Reform League was formed in 1865, it was supported by the Junta, the International Working Men's Association and by such experienced Chartists as Ernest Jones.

The climax of this campaign came on 6th May 1867 when the Reform League planned to hold a meeting and demonstration in Hyde Park. The Government banned the meeting and sent three police superintendents to inform the meeting of this fact. Despite the warning it was decided to go ahead. An army of troops and police was assembled near the park. They numbered ten thousand men. The League erected ten platforms and Professor Beales, Reform League President, opened the meeting at 6.30 p.m. as announced. The crowd, estimated at 150,000, behaved with commendable discipline. The troops were not used and a recurrence of Peterloo was avoided. This was rightly interpreted as a victory for the League and a humiliating defeat for the Government. The Home Secretary resigned.

Certainly this trial of strength gave confidence to the advocates of reform who continued to press their case and achieved some success in the Reform Act of 1867 which enfranchised nearly twice the number of men as had previously held the vote. For trade unionists, however, the victory of May 6th was just as significant in that they had gained the right to hold meetings in Hyde Park.

Thus was a pattern set in London for trade unionists everywhere to follow—peaceful agitation for industrial demands, parliamentary reform, strikes only as a last resort and then always keeping within the law. Unfortunately for the Junta they were not always followed in their law-abiding and respectable paths by the rank and file trade unionists, especially in the northern industrial towns. There, small, local and often aggressively militant trade societies, as for example, the Sheffield Grinders Unions, had the habit of taking the law into their own hands to deal with such of their number who refused to conform to trade union procedure. In 1866 a home-made bomb was exploded in the house of a non-unionist. This was the climax of a number of violent attacks in Sheffield and Manchester which had the national press and the employers out for the blood of all trade unions, peaceful and militant alike.

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The leaders of the New Model Unions took immediate steps to establish that the 'outrages' had no link with their unions. Meetings were held at which strong disapproval of such practices was expressed and the Junta sent representatives to Sheffield to investigate. They proved to their satisfaction that their unions were not implicated and called for a Royal Commission of Enquiry to establish this beyond refute.

The Commission, which was set up in 1867, sent a sub-committee to Sheffield (and later to Manchester) to investigate the outrages on the spot and proceeded from there to inquire into the whole of the workings of the trade union movement. This was also prompted by a legal case, *Hornby v. Close*, in which the Bradford Branch of the Boilermakers' Society sued their treasurer for wrongfully withholding £24. The Magistrates held that the Union, not being a Friendly Society, could not proceed under the Act which gave security to the funds of Friendly Societies. This decision was confirmed by the Court of Queen's Bench which found, in addition, that the objects of the Union if not actually criminal were yet such that they made the Society an illegal association. Naturally the large unions were anxious to alter such potentially dangerous opinions.

The trades unions called in their middle-class friends to assist them in establishing their right to a secure and legal existence. Frederic Harrison, Professor Beesly, Thomas Hughes and Henry Crompton were among those who gave unstintingly of their time and knowledge to help the Junta prepare the case. Hours were spent in conference at the London offices of the engineers. Although the Government would not agree to a trade union representative on the Commission, the Junta were able to exert pressure to ensure that Thomas Hughes and Frederic Harrison were appointed. Applegarth, Allan and Potter among others were called to give evidence.¹ Their brief was to present the trades unions as pacific and respectable organisations. They were eminently successful. So much so that the Government enacted legislation in 1871 which assured trades unions both legal status and security from embezzlement of their funds. Restrictions were, however, placed upon picketing which were not removed until 1875.

¹ See p. 45, et seq below.

The Report of the Royal Commission conceded the right to combine and to withdraw labour providing that the right of all other workmen to undertake the work, which those combining had refused, was maintained. They also thought that the employer should have no obstruction placed in the way of his obtaining a supply of labour elsewhere. The Report laid down that 'whilst conceding to such workmen as desire to exercise it an extended right to combine against their employers, especial care should be taken that an equal right be secured to those workmen who desire to keep aloof from the combination, to dispose of their labour with perfect freedom as they severally think fit'.¹ The acceptance of these strictures was strongly opposed by the rank and file, who campaigned to remove them during the following four years. The Report of the Royal Commission of 1867 nevertheless marked a distinct turn in favour of public recognition of trade unionism and thus underlined the need for a united body which could both be a parliament of trade unionists and a spokesman for the whole movement.

Throughout its history there have been attempts to unite the trade union movement. As early as 1818, when unions were still illegal under the Combination Acts, a meeting of trade union delegates from the Manchester area formed an association called *The Philanthropic Society* under the leadership of John Doherty. In the same year a similar association in London under the leadership of John Gast was called *The Philanthropic Hercules*. John Gast was a member of the Shipwrights' Society.

These early attempts to form general unions were shortlived but they paved the way for later attempts. John Doherty tried again in 1830 when he formed *The National Association for the Protection of Labour*. This association was based in the North, mainly in the cotton industry around Manchester. It did, however, spread to other trades in Lancashire, Yorkshire and the Midlands. It lasted only two years.

In 1834 a more ambitious attempt was made at the instigation of Robert Owen. This was called *The Grand National Consolidated Trades Union*. The object was to enrol all the trades unions throughout the country into one united body. Although the Grand National attracted a large membership, it soon

¹ Somers, R., *The Trade Unions*, 1876, pp. 54-55.

found itself in difficulties. This was partly due to internal dissension, partly to its inability to consolidate its organisation and partly to the fact that it became involved in strikes without the necessary funds. It was shortlived and was dissolved on 20th August 1834.¹

Twelve years later, at the instigation of the Sheffield trades, the London trades called a conference at Easter 1845 which set up the *National Association of the United Trades for the Protection of Labour*. This conference was attended by 110 delegates who formulated the aim of promoting 'all measures, political, social and educational, which are intended to improve the conditions of the labouring classes'.² Although a further conference was held and the Association remained in being, it did not succeed in growing into a powerful organisation.

During the 1860's the trades unions considerably increased their strength. Between 1858 and 1867, Trades Councils were formed in the major centres of industry. This led to a considerable extension of activity over a wider field. Sectarian interests began to fade. In 1864, the Glasgow Trades Council called what was to be the first of a series of conferences which led to the formation of the Trades Union Congress in 1868. The object of this conference was to stimulate an agitation to secure the amendment of The Master and Servant Act. As this was a vital matter for the trades unions it attracted widespread support.³

Following the trade depression of the middle sixties and especially the cotton famine of 1862-3, a trade union conference was held in Sheffield at which it was determined to form a *United Kingdom Alliance of Organised Trades* for the specific purpose of helping unions involved in strikes or lock-outs over the wage cuts. This alliance was based on the North, and the Amalgamated Societies and the London unions held aloof.

The Sheffield conference proposed that a further gathering should be held the following year and that the London Trades Council should call it. This request was ignored. By this time, the London Trades Council, very much under the influence of the Junta and worried both about the Sheffield outrages and

¹ Cole, G. D. H., *Attempts at General Union*, 1953, pp. 4-45.

² Webb, S. & B., *History of Trade Unionism*, 1898, p. 165.

³ See Harrison, F., on p. 141 below.

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their financial position following the *Hornby v. Close* case, were not disposed to co-operate. The last thing the Junta wanted in 1867 was an invasion of militants from the North who might cast doubt on the picture of pacific trades unionism they were trying to impress upon the Royal Commission.

A conference was in fact called in London in 1867 at the instigation of George Potter. This was under the auspices of the *London Working Men's Association*, a small group interested in reviving the agitation for the People's Charter. Potter was the President. The conference went on record against the policy being pursued by the Junta and it deplored the refusal of the London Trades Council to co-operate with the rest of the movement.

The following year a further conference of trades unions was called in Manchester under the presidency of W. H. Wood, the Secretary of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council. It is this conference which is now taken to be the first Trades Union Congress.¹

Mr. Wood, in his *History of Salford*, recounts how the decision to hold the congress was taken at a meeting held in *The Three Crowns*, then situated at the corner of Garden Lane and King Street, Salford.

The Congress, which, stated Wood, 'assembles annually in a previously selected centre of industry for the rectification of existing grievances and preparing the way for the amelioration of the social condition of the working class community',² was held at the Mechanic's Institute, David Street, Manchester during Whit week from Tuesday, June 2nd to Saturday, June 6th 1868.

Between 1867 and 1871 the Amalgamated Societies did not join the rest of the trades union movement in their annual Congress. The Trade Union Act of 1871, while it improved the juridical position of trades unions, placed such restrictions on normal strike activity, like picketing, that even the Junta were convinced of the need for a united trade union movement to force a change in the law. Thus unity was finally achieved.

¹ For a detailed account of the proceedings of the first T.U.C. see p. 21 et seq. below.

² Wood, W. H., *History of Salford*, passim.

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This was all a hundred years ago. Since then, the Trades Union Congress has grown well beyond the dreams of its pioneers. It has become the parliament of labour and its proceedings and decisions vastly influence affairs at home and abroad. Yet there are certain similarities today with the situation of 1868 which the trades union movement will ignore only at its peril. Automation and atomic energy have brought the working class to the verge of great social changes, greater perhaps than those they confronted in 1868, and once again a Royal Commission is investigating the unions and there are numerous demands for a reduction of their strength and the weakening of their power. As in 1868 only a vital and vigilant movement can see its members safely through.

Report of the First Trades Union Congress Manchester, 1868

[The following detailed report of the first Trades Union Congress is taken from contemporary newspaper accounts, particularly from the Manchester Guardian of Wednesday, June 3rd 1868 and the following days. A number of speeches and debates have been summarised by the Editors.]

The first Trades Union Congress began on Tuesday, June 2nd 1868 at the Mechanics' Institution, David Street, Manchester. 34 delegates attended, representing Societies whose total membership was 118,367. The delegates came from London, Dublin, Manchester, Salford, Liverpool, Bolton, Leeds, Preston, Bradford, Sheffield, Birmingham, Nottingham and other towns.

W. H. Wood (Secretary, Manchester Trades Council) took the chair and called for nominations for a President, Vice-President and a Secretary of the Congress. After some discussion, Mr. W. H. Wood was elected President; Mr. F. Booker (Salford Amalgamated Joiners) was elected Vice-President and Mr. Peter Shorrocks (Manchester and Salford Trades Council) was elected Secretary. After a rather long discussion on Standing Orders, the conference adjourned and was resumed after two hours.

THE PRESIDENT began by explaining why the Manchester Trades Council had convened the conference. Although a

Royal Commission (he said) had been sitting for some time taking evidence as to the operations of various trade societies in this country, yet neither that Commission nor the press and the public had been able to ascertain the claims which the trade societies had nor the principles upon which they had been established. It had therefore been thought desirable that representatives of all the great industries of the country should be convened in Manchester, as the centre of provincial industry, when trade unionists might attend and discuss those points in regard to which so much difference of opinion had been expressed. The Papers to be read would be upon the following subjects: Trade Unions, an absolute necessity; Trade Unions and Political Economy; The Effect of Trade Unions on Foreign Competition; Regulation of the Hours of Labour; Limitation of Apprentices; Technical Education; Co-operation; The Present Inequality of the Law in regard to Conspiracy; Intimidation, Picketing, Co-ercion etc.; The Factory Acts Extension Bill, 1867; The Necessity of Compulsory Inspection and its application to all places where women and children are employed; The Present Royal Commission on Trade Unions—how far worthy of the confidence of the trade union interest; Legalisation of Trade Societies; The Necessity of an Annual Conference of trade representatives from various Centres of Industry.

TRADES UNIONS—A NECESSITY

A. W. BAILEY (Preston Amalgamated Trades Council) read the first paper on 'Trade Unions: An absolute Necessity' which, he said, had been prepared by Mr. George Potter of London and adopted by the Preston Trades Council in preference to the paper prepared under its own auspices. The paper, after an historical introduction, stated that trade unions ought to secure for the workman that share of the profits of production which was due to labour. In this definition of their object, there were four things desired and claimed—First, the power of bargaining as a seller of labour; Second, a fair wage claimed by the labourer as a worker; Third, reasonable hours of toil, the worker being subject to physical exhaustion and prostration

during his labour; Fourth, a share of the profits realised by production, he being the producer. A bargain implied two parties—a buyer and a seller. In the case of the commodity of labour they asked that that principle should apply. One party called capitalists were the buyer; working men were the sellers. The capitalist was rich, the labourer poor; the capitalist, powerful; labourer, as an individual, powerless; the capitalist strong, sometimes arrogant and oppressive; the labourer weak, submissive and defenceless. The capitalist had every comfort, was surrounded probably by the luxuries of life; the labourer perhaps without food and with a family depending upon him for support. In these positions, the parties came together to bargain.

An individual working man could not drive a just and equitable bargain with the capitalist under such conditions. The power of Combination was only just sufficient to counteract the power which the capitalist possessed. The capitalist who employed a thousand men who were combined was on the same footing as they; but if the men were isolated, he was a thousand times stronger. They did not advocate a dishonest or wrong use of combinations. The man who abused trade unions was their enemy. The role of those organisations was a fair, honest transaction between capitalist and workman; as such he should always defend them, but when they became an abuse he should not. He should however accept no definition of abuses from those who knew nothing about trade unions. He could only trust those who went amongst them and associated with them. In proof of his statements he would refer to any town, village or trade where unions did not exist—there would be found the lowest possible rate of wages and the greatest distress; but where they did exist they found the best wages, the shortest hours and men in the best social and moral condition. If any one doubted this fact he would point to agricultural labourers as one specimen; and if it was still doubted he would take a higher class and point to the curates of the Church of England.

The experience of all ages and nations proved that liberal wages were the keenest spur to assiduous exertion. Everything that tended to depress the condition of the working classes, or sink them in the social scale, should be at once removed. Those

who fed and clothed should themselves be well-fed and well-clothed. After helping the power to bargain, combinations were necessary, as man was subject to physical prostration, to reduce the hours of labour. Labour, in moderation, was essential to their bodily and intellectual well-being; but excessive toil was hurtful both to body and soul. With the increase of machinery they claimed more time for rest, recreation and improvement. But this, in fact, was not granted. Every extension led to more work. 'Speed, Speed' was the cry; and humanity was sacrificed at the greed of gain. Where they formerly worked 60 hours a week, they now only worked 52 hours. They had lifted up their heel and put it upon the neck of the grasping and money grubbing spirit which possessed the majority of capitalists and employers.

Trade unionists asked for time to think and read; they wished to extend education, because knowledge was the great necessity of their being and would aid in the acquisition of higher wages, healthier homes, social independence and political liberty. (*Applause.*)

J. WILD (Yorkshire Glass Bottlemakers) . . . in 1857 it was thought necessary that there should be an amalgamation of the Glass Bottle Makers of Great Britain and Ireland and an amalgamation eventually took place. In July 1860, the men of Yorkshire applied for an advance of wages of 3s. a week which they gained after a partial strike of 10 weeks duration. That was one thing which showed that trade unions were a necessity. When they had no funds, employers reduced their wages 6s. a week and when the workmen were amalgamated and had funds at their disposal they obtained 3s. of it back again. Eventually the Yorkshire glass blowers formed a society amongst themselves and they pledged themselves that they would not ask for an advance of wages for five years. They went on for three years and then asked for an advance of 3s. per week; but the application was refused on the ground that it had come upon the masters by surprise. The matter stood over for a few months but eventually the increase was granted. The masters afterwards gave notice of their intention to reduce the wages of the workmen 3s. per week but their proposal was objected to and a partial strike took place. In regard to the number of apprentices the workmen had so far gained their point that the masters

had consented to meet them in a body in order to see whether they could not come to some terms. Thus, by combination, the workmen had obtained 6s. per week advance, whilst when they were not combined their wages were reduced 6s. per week.

G. CLARE (United Trades Association of Dublin) said that professional men, attorneys and others adopted the principle of combination, which, strangely enough they, and the kid-gloved classes of society generally, deprecated amongst working men. They were, moreover, supported in this combination by the law of the land. If a lawyer charged less than the accustomed fees for professional services, he would sink in social position. The tradesman, imitating his superiors in the matter of combination, became, in their estimation, a terrible conspirator, inimical to the progress of the commonwealth and antagonistic to the public weal. He did not deprecate such organisations in high life; but he did deprecate any depreciation of the principle when the interests of the class were concerned from which all their comfort and wealth flowed. (*Hear, hear.*)

MR. TOWNLEY (Manchester Dressers and Dyers Society) said that the first trade combination that had been heard of in Lancashire was a combination amongst the employers themselves, when they sought to obtain the repeal of an obnoxious law which affected their trade. In the fustian cutting trade they found pieces had, of late years, been so much enlarged and their weight so greatly increased, as to render the working of them extremely difficult. It had, besides, an injurious effect upon the physical frames of the workpeople, causing hernia, consumption and other diseases; yet he saw no remedy as things at present existed. If a trade union combination could relieve the fustian cutting trade of these evils, it would confer a blessing on humanity. (*Applause.*)

MR. BLACKBURN (Yorkshire Glass Bottle Makers' Society) said that he had no hesitation in asserting that if trade union societies were abandoned, the wages of workmen in connection with his own trade would be reduced by 6s. or 7s. a week. He was proud of being a trade union man. He liked the bracing atmosphere of trades unionism for it taught him to benefit himself and to be useful and respectful to his employers.

MR. KANE (Association of Malleable Ironworkers, Gates-

head) said that trade societies were necessary because they enabled workmen to obtain a fair price for their labour. Poverty fell in the wake of low wages and the whole district became pauperised. Trade societies promoted sympathy and good feeling amongst working men and in the event of a redundancy of labour, they enabled the workmen and masters practically to deal with the difficulty.

After a number of delegates took part in the discussion, defending the principle of trades unions on various grounds, MR. G. POTTER (London) said they were assuming too much in their discussion with regard to trades unions, and did not really grasp the fact, which he believed would turn up before the Conference closed, that there was a more determined opposition to trades unions now than had ever before appeared in their history—(*Hear, hear*). Whilst believing that trades unions were a necessity and doing a great amount of good, they must not close their eyes to the fact that it was believed by many that those organisations were declining. The assertion was made both by the press and by capitalists. At the present time there were more powerful organisations amongst capitalists and employers than there used to be. The building trade, for instance, had one great united organisation, to which expense, in the carrying out of its objects, was no consideration. Hence the necessity of vigilance on the part of workmen. Unless they devised some system whereby their unions might be improved, the hold which they had upon the country would decrease and their influence would deteriorate.

The importance of trade unions was shown by the opposition which was brought to bear against them and the determination manifested in certain quarters to put them down. Although they had done much good in a variety of ways, they were not now doing half the work that they ought to do. A feeling had sprung up that, as so much had been accomplished during the last five or ten years, they were now things to be only leisurely and carelessly played with. That feeling must be shaken off. They must ever have before them the fact that a determined effort was being made by certain classes to crush them out of existence. England was better now than she had ever been, owing to the producers of her wealth and the supporters of her influence

getting better paid for their work than they were in former years. (*Applause.*)

Second Day

The conference resumed consideration of the subject 'Trade Unions an absolute necessity'.

THE PRESIDENT said that trades unions were absolutely necessary in order that operatives might be defended against the attempts made by employers to ride rough-shod over them. If all men were honest and imbued with the principles which were supposed to regulate the moral conduct of professing Christians, there would be no necessity for them. Operatives in self-defence entered into a compact not to sell each other's labour at a less rate than what was a fair equivalent for the skill acquired in learning during apprenticeship; and they further declined to teach their trade to a greater number of apprentices than were likely to find employment on the completion of their servitude; nor were they inclined to work with any who refused to comply with these regulations.

Employers urged that they would be willing to pay a certain *minimum* rate if a fixed price could be secured by them for goods produced. The *minimum* sought to be established by trades unions tended to bring about that result; and if employers would be content to fix a limit to their profits for money invested and time occupied, the market value of all articles could be determined. Manufacturers and others employing labour often reduced their prices to effect sales at a figure that would neither pay labour nor material; and were wages to be paid according to this principle, the reduction would know no limit.

Trades unions were charged with dragging down all workmen to one common level. This was a pure fallacy. A *minimum* rate was fixed in most trades and employers had the option of increasing that rate according to the merits of individual workmen, which was in some cases practically carried out. The *minimum* was supposed to represent the lowest figure at which an intelligent operative, of average ability, could maintain himself and family and fulfil the duties of citizenship. Nor was the

adoption of that standard rate without beneficial results to the employer, for it enabled him to maintain his estimates with certainty, knowing that such a market value prevailed with his competitors. There was no rule in existence in any trade that prevented the employer from remunerating a good, faithful, and intelligent servant by an advance on the *minimum* scale. If employers were sufficiently discriminating in this matter greater faith would be placed in them by their workmen. A premium paid for excellency of work, increased production and economy of material would secure great results; whilst the encouragement held forth would induce men to become more skilful and intelligent in their occupations. Finally, wherever union principles were ignored, a low rate of wage prevailed; but the reverse where organisation was perfect. The most approved remedy for low wages was combination. The sufferings endured by those who were necessitated to accept any terms that the hirer dictated were indescribable. With enfeebled bodies and weak minds, combined with temptation to sin, they sank lower and lower in the social scale, until, like Ishmael, their hand was against every man and every man's hand was against them. (*Applause.*)

After some remarks from Mr. A. Wood (Birmingham Trades Council), Mr. Clare (Dublin Associated Trades), and Mr. McDonald (Manchester) the discussion on this subject was brought to an end.

SHORTER HOURS

C. D. DEWHURST (Secretary, Bradford Trades Council), then read a paper on 'The Regulation of the hours of Labour'. He said that a reduction in the hours of labour was the great question of the day. The surplus labour which the introduction of machinery by various branches of industry created, the over-production where unlimited hours were worked, the disadvantages which operatives underwent in the matter of education and the care and toil day by day was too much to bear; and the loss to the nation in that which made it great, in physical capacity and intelligence, resulted. It was not machin-

ery in particular that he objected to, for in Bradford, so far as his experience extended, they welcomed rather than opposed its introduction. But from the admission of machinery, as their labour became consumed to some extent by it, they claimed a share of profit.

A reduction in the hours of labour was necessary in order that production should not exceed consumption to the injury of the operative; and in order that the country should not suffer loss by the creation of enforced idleness. The question affected every branch of industry; and if the working classes examined it fairly, they would find that, by disbursing labour so that all should have a fair share—that all should perform their quota of work—all would enjoy the blessings of industry and none be in want when a depression took place unless it was a depression such as the East End of London now witnessed or as the unfortunate civil war in America produced in this country. The former was produced by the bad laws, which gamblers on the exchange took advantage of. The misery and starvation, the forced idleness which now prevailed, would to a great extent have been mitigated, if not entirely abolished, had a better regulation of the hours of labour been adopted in preference to the irregular system which prevailed.

What he desired was that each branch of industry should so regulate its hours that the surplus labour should, as far as possible, be consumed. Efforts had been made and were being made with this object in various parts of England and with success in the building trades; and if trades generally took the question into consideration, they would find that when a change came over the market in which their produce was sold it would not affect their employment to the extent it did at the moment. There would not be that quantity of stock on hand which would enable employers, at the earliest opportunity, particularly in the iron and coal trades, to reduce wages on unreasonably short notice. A reduction in the hours of labour was the only means by which forced idleness in many trades could be obviated.

G. POTTER (London) said that long hours combined with the introduction of machinery had contributed largely to throw workers out of employment. This was inevitable. Perfection in

machinery had not yet been reached. Where machines did the work, human labour necessarily became stagnant and useless. He should not be going too far when he said that the time would arrive when human labour would, for the most part, be dispensed with, and when men would only be required to guide and manage machines. (*Hear, hear*). As that state of things became general the labour market would become overstocked and it would be a serious consideration for statesmen and the legislature to determine what should be done about it. Our cities were already overcrowded. There were at the present time from two to three millions of workmen out of employment. In addition, we had a million paupers and our gaols were full. The question was, how could that surplus labour be employed? Surely it was better that all should be employed than that half only should work and the other half subsist upon their earnings. (*Hear, hear.*)

This could only be done by a shortening of the hours of toil. If the people of this country could be fed and clothed and the present rate of produce in manufactures maintained, by their working five hours a day—there would be no necessity for their working twelve, fifteen or eighteen hours. Where short hours were adopted trade was progressive, men were more healthy; they earned more money and were benefited morally, socially and intellectually. How were they to employ their surplus labour? This was the question for trades unionists. They must get hold of the land and throw the unemployed upon it; get the over-worked to work fewer hours in the day and allow all to have a share in employment. The produce of the soil in Great Britain was capable, he had the best authority for saying, if that soil was properly cultivated, of supporting a population of one hundred millions. The late Mr. Cobden said in one of his remarkable speeches that surplus labour would be the ruin of the country. It was impoverishing our homes and filling our workhouses and gaols, for when a man had nothing to do, he, as a rule, found some mischief to engage in. (*Hear, hear.*)

It was distressing to see men sitting at home, idle, and supported by their wives and children. One of the curses of this country was cheap labour by women and children. We had arrived at a time when adult males might perform all the

manual labour that was necessary and when women and children, whose condition of toil was degrading to the country, should be relieved to a great extent from work. As trades unionists, they ought to consent to a reduction of wages for a few years in order to secure short time. (*Hear, hear.*) Let the eight hours movement be adopted, and he believed, as it had proved beneficial in America, it would also prove beneficial here. The world should understand then, that they were determined to reduce the hours of toil and to crush the women and children labour of this country. (*Applause.*)

There followed some remarks by Mr. John Wilde (Rotherham) and Mr. T. Davies (Bolton), after which MR. TOWNLEY (Salford) said a curtailment of the hours of labour was necessary, in his opinion, in order that workmen might have opportunities for self improvement. Among the operatives he represented (the dressers, dyers and finishers) the hours were very irregular and great physical suffering was the result. MR. KANE (Gateshead) supported the arguments of preceding speakers and said the hours of labour should be reduced even at a sacrifice of wages. He hoped the matter would be kept in view and some scheme devised by which a practical effect might be given to their views.

Mr. Bromilow (Liverpool), Mr. Davies (Bolton), Mr. Anderson (Hulme), Mr. Garstang (Manchester) and Mr. Higham (Nottingham) supported the view of a restriction on the hours of labour, chiefly on the ground of the intellectual and physical benefit which such a measure would confer upon the operative class.

MR. BLACKBURN (Dewsbury) said that night drinking affected them injuriously a great deal more than their physical toil during the day. Drink was as great an enemy to them as the worst employer who ever lived. (*Hear, hear.*) Greater loss had been inflicted upon the Glass Bottle Makers Society, which he represented, by drink, than anything legitimately connected with their trade.

After some remarks from Mr. Ellison (Bolton), MR. ORD (Liverpool) said that long hours had a great tendency towards demoralisation. Physical exhaustion was followed by dram drinking (*hear, hear*)—and he believed the long-hours system

was at the bottom of much of the drunkenness in this country. There were public parks, museums and other institutions of an educational character intended to benefit working men, but they were like meat placed before a hungry man who was so fettered as to be unable to reach it. MR. RIDGE (Salford) said the poverty of the unemployed brought about such a low condition of sentiment that it was impossible to get them to move in any matter. They should be stimulated to advocate the short-time movement.

MR. WILKINSON (Birmingham United Flint Glass Makers) moved:

That this Congress is of opinion that in order to promote the well-being of the working classes and to neutralise the sad effects of the surplus labour of this country, it is highly essential that the hours of labour should be reduced, and employment thereby given to all who are able and who desire to work, instead of, as now, one part working and the other living upon their produce; and that to enable this object to be effected, this Congress recommends that all trades councils and societies to bring before their members the serious consideration of a commutation of the hours of labour and trade representatives present pledge themselves in the name of their respective societies to render such support as may be in their power, by the general circulation of printed information and the interchange of delegates who shall address trade union meetings upon the question.

MR. KANE seconded the proposition, which, after some discussion, was passed.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION

The VICE-PRESIDENT (Mr. F. Booker) in a paper on the subject of technical education, gave a historical sketch of the movement which led to the establishment of the Manchester and Salford Carpenters and Joiners Institute of Technical Education opened in St. John's Schoolroom, Gartside Street on the 6th April, 1868. MR. WILKINSON (Birmingham) followed

with a paper, similar in character in which he stated that steps were being taken in Birmingham with the same object. MR. WILLIAMS (Liverpool) whilst concurring in the desirability of technical education, drew attention to the necessity of primary education and especially to the home education of women.

MR. C. HUTCHINSON (Boiler Makers and Shipwrights Society) said they were, in his opinion, beginning at the top of the tree. Before technical education, so-called, could be of service to a man, he must have some primary instruction. Why attempt to thrust geometry down his throat if he knew nothing of elementary arithmetic? Mr. WILDE (Rotherham) expressed similar views. Mr. DRONFIELD (Sheffield) said he hoped the question would be well agitated. Trade societies should show that they had other objects in view besides the regulation of the rate of wages, the number of apprentices and so forth, which, although important, were not the only things they should consider. MR. WOOD (Birmingham) said what they wanted most was a national and compulsory system of elementary education. Go wherever they chose, they would find a great want of education.

Here, the President called Mr. Wood to order saying that if they were to enter upon the general question of education they might be there till next week. Mr. Wood said he had the same right as others to express his views on the general question. Before sitting down, however, he would say that he opposed a system of technical education altogether, and, if permitted, he should move an amendment.

MR. KANE (Gateshead) said that the days had gone by when it was considered unnecessary for a man to be familiar with the technicalities of his own trade. He knew of no industry which would benefit more from technical education than that connected with the manufacture of iron. He hoped trade organisations generally would imitate the good example of the Carpenters and Joiners of Manchester.

MR. POTTER (London) said that 15 years ago the Carpenters Society of London, to which he belonged, had classes for technical instruction and he apprehended that, for the advance which had taken place in public sentiment on this question, more was due to trade societies than to any other body of men. The Government, of course, took up things which became

popular; but his society had anticipated the Government; and without waiting for the discussion of the matter by conferences or by Parliament, they had taken up the question for themselves. If continental countries excelled us in the quality of their manufactures it was because their governments had fostered technical education, which ours had not done. It was a significant fact that nearly all the improvements which had taken place in machinery of late years in this country were the invention of men who belonged to the operative class. (*Hear, hear.*)

The Conference was adjourned.

Third Day

The discussion on Technical Education was resumed.

MR. A. WOOD (Birmingham Trades Council) dwelt upon the importance of elementary education, the promotion of which was more important, in his opinion, than technical education. He moved a resolution to the effect that the Conference should pledge itself to support a national system of secular education for the poor.

This motion did not find a seconder, and after some remarks from Messrs. Ellison and Davies (Bolton) and Mr. Ashton (Warrington) in support of technical education, Mr. Booker, who introduced the topic, replied. The discussion then closed.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION

THE PRESIDENT said the next question to be considered was 'The present Royal Commission on Trades Unions, how far worthy of the confidence of the trade union interest'. That Commission, he said, did not faithfully represent the labour interest, inasmuch as no working man had been placed upon it, who by his knowledge of the practical working of trade union principles, would have elicited the information favourable to their cause. The mode in which the inquiry was conducted also, was calculated to affect them injuriously. The operative was placed in the invidious position of criminating himself, without being allowed an opportunity of reply.

MR. DRONFIELD (Sheffield) in introducing the subject said the refusal of the Government to allow a working man to be placed on the Commission was anything but creditable to them. So far as he could ascertain, working men who had been examined were dissatisfied with the treatment they had received particularly from the honourable member for Sheffield, Mr. Roebuck. That gentleman had a strong bias against trade societies and he endeavoured to bring all out that told against them, whilst rejecting evidence in their favour. He concluded that the Commission was unworthy of their confidence. (*Hear, hear.*) It had not shown a disposition to do them justice and they ought to be on the alert to see that no legislation was attempted which might be injurious to their interests. (*Applause.*)

MR. BLATCHLEY (London Press Society) said he was glad that the outrages at Sheffield had been brought to light. The perpetrators of them deserved to be severely punished. In a few days he should attend, with other members of his body, before the Commissioners and should declare, as he did before that Conference, that they had no connection with the diabolical outrages attributed to trades unionists. The Society which he represented had never had a strike, nor had they done anything in carrying out their objects which could be considered dishonest or disreputable. He submitted the following resolution:

That this meeting, while deploring the diabolical acts brought before the Trade Union Commission, most emphatically denies having, or ever having had, any connection with those acts, or with those who have committed them; and the delegates pledge themselves collectively and severally, to protect, in a constitutional and legitimate manner, the interests and privileges of trade unionists.

(*This was not seconded*)

MR. POTTER (London) said that on the appointment of the Royal Commission the trades of London exerted themselves to have a working man put upon it and failing in this, they induced Mr. Walpole, then Home Secretary, to consent to the appointment of Mr. Harrison, a barrister, who might to some extent be said to represent them. Then a conference of trades unionists

was held at St. Martin's Hall and a deputation was appointed to wait upon the Commissioners in order to ascertain in what way they could co-operate with them and afford information. After several interviews, the Commissioners decided not to accept their co-operation; but they allowed Mr. Connolly, on behalf of the Trades Committee, to hear the evidence in order that he might have the opportunity of communicating with trade societies and getting up counter evidence where necessary. When Mr. Connolly, however, at a public meeting, made some remarks reflecting upon Mr. Roebuck, the Commissioners decided, upon a demand being made by the hon. member, to exclude Mr. Connolly from all further sittings. A deputation waited upon the Commissioners to ask them to rescind their resolution but they refused and the Committee decided not to take any further action.

Since then, little interest had been taken in the proceedings of the Commission; but the Committee would meet again and consider what should be done. The action of the Commissioners generally had been unfavourable to working men. They had created a bad impression, which it would be impossible to remove and which would seriously impair the value of any report which they might ultimately present. Not only had they insulted working men, in the person of Mr. Connolly, but they had also refused admission to the press and studiously prevented them from getting information as to what was going on. So far from being an open and fair inquiry, it partook more of the character of a Star Chamber. (*Hear, hear.*)

A large body of men, probably 800,000, were on their trial and that trial was conducted with closed doors. The evidence, he believed, so far had been favourable to trades unions. Mr. Mault, on behalf of the master builders, had ransacked the country for documentary evidence and the Commissioners received it; but no secondary evidence was allowed to be tendered on behalf of workmen. In short, every privilege was given to the masters and the least possible courtesy shown to the men. When the Commission was appointed, he rejoiced, because there was nothing in their organisations with regard to which they did not court enquiry. There was nothing which they feared should come out. He considered Mr. Blatchley's

resolution unnecessary in a conference of that kind. It was not within their province to consider outrages like those at Sheffield. He ignored and repudiated them. They were not committed by trades unions. Trades Unions never encouraged them. They were perpetrated by the enemies of Trade Unions, and should be put down by the strong hand of the law. (*Applause.*) They abhorred and detested them, they were conspiracies for the destruction of human life and of property—conspiracies of human villainy and not of Trade Unions. As a body, they rose above them and were not to be tainted even with the suspicion of being connected with them.

MR. WOOD (Birmingham) said the Commission was unworthy of confidence because it sought evidence only to shew the dark side of Trades Unions and rejected that which related to their benevolent character. He repudiated such atrocities as those of Sheffield. He would move

That, from the manner in which the Commissioners have conducted their transactions, this Conference deems them unworthy of public confidence.

Mr. Kane (Gateshead), the Vice-President, Mr. Townley (Salford), and Mr. Ridge (Salford), condemned the proceedings of the Commissioners chiefly on the ground of their one-sidedness and unfairness towards Trade Union interests. Mr. Dronfield replied and Mr. Wood submitted his resolution, which was seconded by Mr. Townley. It was, however, arranged that, with other propositions, it should be referred to a Committee with instructions to frame a suitable resolution to be submitted subsequently.

The Conference then adjourned for an hour, and on resuming, the following proposition, prepared by the Committee, was submitted.

That it is the opinion of this Congress, notwithstanding the voluminous character of the evidence which has been given by employers and employed, that the confidence of the trades has been most seriously shaken, in consequence of the unseemly interruptions to which the trades' representatives

have been subjected; and we believe it is impossible for the members of the Commission to do justice to working men's combinations, it being composed of representatives of the law, the landed aristocracy, the railway, mining and manufacturing interests, who have ever been opposed to the social interests and trade unions of working men.

Mr. Shorrocks (Manchester) seconded the motion.

Mr. Wood (Birmingham) submitted the resolution which he had prepared, as an amendment; but, after discussion, the original proposition was carried by a majority.

MR. G. POTTER (London) proposed the following rider:

That, after a full and deliberate discussion upon the Royal Commission appointed to enquire into the operations of the Trade Unions, the delegates are of opinion that the Commission has been looked upon up to the present time with suspicion and disfavour by a majority of the trades of England, both in regard to its unfair composition, and also to its one-sided, and to a great extent secret, proceedings. (*Applause.*)

He said he was anxious that the Conference should not condemn wholesale the proceedings of the Commission. Some of its members commanded their respect, and with a portion of the proceedings, they had every reason to be satisfied.

Mr. Davis (Bolton) seconded Mr. Potter's amendment, which was carried by a large majority. The remainder of the sitting was taken up with a discussion introduced by the President on the limitation of the number of apprentices. The Conference was then adjourned.

Fourth Day

LEGALISATION

MR. DAVIES (Masons Association, Bolton) read a paper on the legalisation of trade societies, in which he said that it was the paramount duty of working men unitedly to demand the full

recognition and legalisation of their Unions. The matter will doubtless occupy the attention of Parliament before long, and trade unionists must watch the course of affairs and see that no repressive clause was inserted in any measure more damaging to their personal and united liberties than even the non protection of their funds could possibly be. (*Hear, hear.*)

A supplementary paper prepared by Mr. John Keegan of Dublin was handed to the Chairman and read. Mr. Hutchinson, on behalf of the Boilermakers & Shipbuilders Society, also handed in a paper, in which protection to trade societies' funds in particular was claimed. Mr. Kane (Gateshead) and Mr. Clare (Dublin) spoke in favour of the proposition to legalise not only the funds, but the objects generally of trade unions. Mr. Ord (Liverpool) addressed the Conference to the same effect.

MR. MACDONALD (Manchester House Painters' Alliance) said he did not expect that Parliament would refuse protection to the benefit funds of trade societies; but it would not sanction regulations which might be said to operate in restraint of trade. They had, however, a right to demand that workmen should enjoy the same privileges as employers. They wanted no special privilege; only equality before the law. It was impossible for trade societies to give up that portion of their rules which related to apprentices, strikes etc.; if they did so, the sooner they gave up the agitation for legalisation the better. (*Hear, hear.*)

Mr. Dewhirst (Bradford), Mr. Wilkinson (Birmingham) and others, having addressed the Conference, the following resolution was moved by Mr. Kane and seconded by Mr. Booker (Salford):

That this Congress pledges itself, in the name of the Societies represented, to aid the London Committee of Amalgamated Trades in their laudable efforts to secure the legal protection of trade societies' funds; and hereby declares its firm determination to continue the agitation and to make the support of this measure a condition with candidates for parliamentary honours before we give any pledge of support or vote at the ensuing election.

The resolution was passed.

FOREIGN COMPETITION

MR. KANE (Gateshead) opened a discussion on the effect of trades unions on foreign competition. He said those organisations had been charged with having, by their action, driven trade to foreign countries. This was an utter fallacy. The periodical distress attributable to loss of trade had been brought about by the power possessed by England to glut the markets of the world. The attempt which was being made to break up trades unions was simply an effort on the part of masters to keep the markets in their own hands. In France strikes were common. Increased wages had been sought in almost every branch of trade in that country and generally with success. Had English workmen made equal demands it would have been said that they were fit only for the gaol or lunatic asylum.

The English trades must watch their interests against continental unions. French manufacturers were actually complaining of trade unions in their own country driving trade to England. It was clear, therefore, that the effect of unions here could not be so destructive of trade as the masters alleged. If all restrictions were taken off labour, and royalty taxes, of which the aristocracy got the benefit, were reduced, the industry of this country could compete with advantage against that of any other country in the world. If unions damaged the trade of this country at all, it was the unions of the aristocracy and not those of the working classes that did it. (*Applause.*)

In the discussion which followed, Mr. BAILEY (Preston) in allusion to the charge against trades unions, said that some time ago a statement appeared in the newspapers to the effect that a Preston firm of cotton spinners had resorted to the continent for its machinery—but this was not true. On inquiry being made it was ascertained that that machinery had been made in Oldham. He denied that it was through trades union interference that the trade of this country was driven into other channels. Mr. Townley, the President and other delegates took the same view.

MR. WILKINSON (Birmingham), who also repelled the charge against trades unions, said that the flint glass manufactures of

the continent could undoubtedly produce a cheaper article than those of England—only cheaper, however, because inferior. Their manufactures were neither in material nor in workmanship comparable with those of England. This remark applied especially to articles of everyday use.

The discussion was continued by Mr. Dewhirst (Bradford), Mr. Bromilow (Liverpool), Mr. Clare (Dublin), Mr. Dronfield (Sheffield), and Mr. Higham (Nottingham).

MR. KANE (Gateshead) replied. He said that in 1866 the iron produce of Belgium amounted to 392,000 tons and that of England to 4,819,000 tons. The number of workmen employed in the iron manufacture of Belgium in the same year was 27,000, and in England 147,000. In 31 years Belgium had increased her annual production to 292,178 tons while the annual production of England had increased during the same period to 3,819,254 tons. Surely there was evidence in that sufficient to convince anyone that the charge against trades unions of having driven trade from the country was groundless. There were men so selfish as to be jealous of others' prosperity. Foreigners had an equal right with themselves to use to the best advantage the raw material which Providence had placed at their disposal. The lesson they had learnt was this—to depend more upon their own resources, and less upon foreigners. (*Hear, hear.*) The export value of English manufacturers was in 1865, £17,095,065 and in 1866, £19,063,000—showing a continuous increase. The return last year was not so large owing to the general depression of trade, not only in England but also abroad.

The debate then closed.

Fifth Day

FACTORY ACTS

MR. BARKER (Letterpress Printers) read a paper on the subject of the Factory Acts extension. He said that the temporary modifications inserted in the act, with the view of gradually accommodating and reconciling all classes to their provisions, had not as yet allowed any perceptible difference to be felt. Two

years would elapse before some of these modifications would be removed and it would not be until their expiry that the full effects of the measure would be obvious. The objectionable modifications he alluded to were those permitting in some trades prolonged hours of working, under the assumed pressure of business, to the extent of fourteen hours per day. The social and educational benefits of night schools, or the advantages of home education and example, were seriously neutralised by those concessions, which, he doubted not, would, after a very brief opposition, be readily given up by employers.

The Conference affirmed the principles stated in this paper.

CONSPIRACY

MR. SHORROCKS (Manchester & Salford) read a paper on the law in regard to conspiracy, intimidation and picketing, which gave rise to a brief discussion, after which the Conference carried, almost unanimously, the following resolution:

That results of the criminal prosecutions and convictions against the London tailors for picketing, which we hold to be justifiable in consequence of the unfair practices which have been resorted to by employers to fill their shops and factories with men who are generally brought from a distance where the nature of the dispute which may have taken place is not known, be it therefore resolved that the influence of this Congress shall be directed in aiding the London Conference of Amalgamated Trades in their endeavours to alter the third section of the 6th of George IV, cap. 129, the object of which is to amend the law in regard to conspiracy, intimidation, picketing, coercion etc., which is unjust, being capable of such misconstruction that it is utterly impossible that justice can be done to the public at large until the law is repealed or amended in such way that it shall be made no more oppressive on trade unionists than on those which are outside such unions.

Mr. Adamson then read a paper on the subject of co-operat-

THE FIRST TRADES UNION CONGRESS

ive societies, and the concluding discussions were on courts of conciliation and on the necessity for an annual congress of trade representatives from the various centres of industry.

On the latter, the Congress passed the following resolution:

That it is highly desirable that the trades of the United Kingdom should hold an annual congress, for the purpose of bringing the trades into closer alliance and to take action in all Parliamentary matters pertaining to the general interests of the working classes.

and then decided to hold the next Congress at Birmingham at a date to be decided by the Birmingham Trades Council.

The Congress closed.

THE DELEGATES TO THE FIRST T.U.C.

Mr. W. J. Davis, in his *History and Recollections of the British Trades Union Congress*, gives the names of 29 delegates, including Nicholson of the Manchester Trades Council, who did not in fact attend although he was one of the convenors of the Congress. Five other names appear in contemporary reports of the Congress. Thus the list of the 33 delegates attending the Congress was as follows:

Adamson, Anderson, Ashton, Bailey, Barker, Blackburn, Blatchley, Booker, Bromilow, Clare, Davies, Dewhirst, Dronfield, Ellison, Garstang, Gorton, Higham, Hutchinson, Kane, Keegan, Macdonald, Ord, Potter, Ridge, Roberts, Shorrocks, Townley, Wild, Wilde, Wilkinson, Williams, A. Wood & W. H. Wood.

DELEGATES' ORGANISATIONS

Delegates to the first T.U.C. represented or were members of the following organisations:

Birmingham Trades Council, Birmingham United Flint

Glass Makers, Bolton Masons Association, Bolton Trades Council, Bradford Trades Council, Dublin United Trades Association, Eccles and Swinton Painters Society, Gateshead Association of Malleable Ironworkers, Iron Founders Society, Letterpress Printers, Liverpool Bricklayers Society, Liverpool Trades Congress Society, London Carpenters Society, London Press Society, Manchester Dressers and Dyers Society, Manchester House Painters Alliance, Manchester and Salford Bakers Society, Manchester and Salford Trades Council, Preston Amalgamated Trades Council, Salford Amalgamated Joiners, Warrington Trades Council, West Gorton Boiler-makers and Shipbuilders Society, Yorkshire Glass Bottlemakers Trade Protection Society.

Extracts from the Minutes of Evidence

TAKEN BEFORE THE

Royal Commission

APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO THE

Trades Unions and other Associations, 1867

Westminster, Monday, 18th March 1867

PRESENT

The Right Hon. Sir WILLIAM ERLE	JAMES BOOTH, Esq., C.B.
The Right Hon. The Earl of LICHFIELD	JOHN ARTHUR ROEBUCK, Esq.,
The Right Hon. Sir EDMUND WALKER	M.P.
HEAD, Bart., K.C.B.	THOMAS HUGHES, Esq., M.P.
HERMAN MERIVALE, Esq., C.B.	FREDERIC HARRISON, Esq.

THE RIGHT HON. SIR WILLIAM ERLE IN THE CHAIR

Mr. ROBERT APPLGARTH examined

(*Chairman.*) What is the association which you belong to?—
The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners.

What office do you hold in that society?—The office of
general secretary. . . .

Is it an association consisting of several societies, or having
several branches under it?—It has branches throughout the
United Kingdom.

What is the number of the branches?—We have 190
branches.

What is the total number of members?—8,261.

Will you state the income for the last year?—The net income for 1865 was £10,487 15s. 0d.

What was the expenditure in the same year?—£6,733 11s. 5½d. . . .

I see that you state in this report that you have had an increase of members of about 2,500 in the last year?—Yes.

What are the objects of your association?—‘The object of this society is to raise funds for the mutual support of its members in case of sickness, accident, superannuation, for the burial of members and their wives, emigration, loss of tools by fire, water, or theft, and for assistance to members out of work; also for granting assistance in cases of extreme distress not otherwise provided for by the rules, for which purpose a contingent and benevolent fund shall be formed.’ These are the objects of the society as stated in the preamble of the rules.

What is the organisation in respect of the branches of the society?—Each branch consists of seven or more members in any town where they think proper to form a branch, and each branch conducts its own business in accordance with the code of rules which I hold in my hand.

The rules explain the management of the society?—Yes; the preamble provides for each branch electing its own officers and managing its own affairs, subject to general laws and regulations laid down in these rules.

Have you an executive council?—Yes.

How is that elected?—It is elected by the branches in the district where the seat of government is held for the time being. At present it is held in London.

It being held in London, what would be the district included?—The postal district.

Are you the secretary for the central district?—I am secretary for the entire society.

General secretary, elected annually by the universal suffrage of the whole society; that is the office that you hold, I suppose?—Yes.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) Is the general secretary elected every year?—The election takes place annually.

(*Chairman.*) There are some other unions, small unions, of

carpenters, that are not at present part of your association?—There are.

But which are eventually, as you believe, coming into the general association?—Yes, we believe so.

How does a person become a member of the association?—He applies through a member to be admitted into the society. He is proposed on a regular meeting night of the branch by a member who knows him to be a qualified workman, to be in good health, and who knows that he can comply with the conditions which are laid down in the rules for his admission. They are as follows:—He must be in good health, have worked five years at the trade, be a good workman, of steady habits, of good moral character, and not more than 45 years of age. He is seconded by some member who also knows him well. He then fills in the following form (and pays 3*d.* for a copy of the rules). He says (after stating his name and address), 'I hereby certify that I am in good health, and, so far as I know, I am not afflicted with any bodily ailment or constitutional disease, and consider myself a proper person to become a member of this society.' Then he states his age in years and months, and how long he has worked at the trade, and says, 'I hereby give my concurrence in the rules' (which he has been furnished with previously), 'and should these statements prove to be untrue, I shall be willing to submit to the penalties contained therein.' He is then asked several questions, whether he has belonged to the society before, for the purpose of ascertaining whether he has left in a disgraceful manner or not. He pays 2*s.* 6*d.*, which is called 'proposition money', and stands over for inquiries to be made respecting his character and abilities. The second time that he puts in an appearance, which must be within three months of the night when he was proposed, he answers all questions put to him, and is admitted or rejected by a majority of those present. If he is rejected his money is handed back to him; if he is accepted he pays his second 2*s.* 6*d.* and is furnished with his member's card, and he pays a shilling per week from that time.

Does 1*s.* per week entitle a man to all the benefits you have specified?—A shilling per week and 3*d.* per quarter to a benevolent and contingent fund. The benefits are as follows:—

Donation benefit for 12 weeks, 10s. per week; and for another 12 weeks, 6s. per week. For leaving employment satisfactory to branch or executive council, 15s. per week; tool benefit to any amount of loss, or when a man has been a member for only six months, £5; sick benefit for 26 weeks, 12s. per week, and then 6s. per week so long as his illness continues; funeral benefit £12, or £3 10s. when a six months' member dies; accident benefit, £100; superannuation benefit for life, if a member 25 years, 8s. per week; if a member 18 years, 7s. per week; if a member for 12 years, 5s. per week. The emigration benefit is £6, and there are benevolent grants, according to circumstances, in cases of distress. . . .

(*Mr. Hughes.*) Have there not been decisions lately at Bradford and elsewhere declaring that some one or more of your rules has been a restraint to trade?—Yes, unfortunately there has.

How many decisions of that kind have there been?—Three.

What was the date of the first?—The 16th of January of the present year.

And since that time there have been two others, have there?—Yes, two others. The first one arose in connexion with the boilermakers' society at Bradford, wherein an officer of that society had withheld some £20 or £30. They took the case into the police court, and they had certain clauses in their rules which were considered to be in restraint of trade, and the magistrates stated that they were not entitled to the provisions of the 44th section of the Friendly Society's Act. The case was taken to the Queen's Bench and the magistrates' decision was confirmed. One of our cases was also tried in the Bradford police court.

Will you tell us when your first case came on?—Before the Hull magistrates, on February 8th.

What was the decision of the magistrates in your case?—They refused to grant a warrant for the man's apprehension on account of the decision that had been previously given in the case of the boilermakers.

Why did you apply for a warrant?—The man had absconded with monies belonging to the society to the amount of £30 or £40.

Was it as secretary that he had done that?—No, as trustee; he was appointed to bank a certain sum of money and he never banked it.

Will you point out upon what rule in your book the magistrates acted on that occasion?—Clause 7, rule 18, page 34.

Can you refer us to any printed report of the decision of the magistrates in that case?—The reports are simply paragraphs in the newspapers; that is all that we have.

Have you got those paragraphs from the newspapers to put in?—I have.

THE LEGAL STATUS OF TRADES' UNIONS.—At the Hull police court on Friday, Mr. F. Summers, solicitor, applied to Mr. Travis, the stipendiary magistrate, to institute legal proceedings against a member of the Hull Carpenters and Joiners Friendly Association.¹ Mr. Summers stated that a trustee of that society had appropriated part of the funds of the association to his own use, namely, two sums of £15 each and one of £5. With respect to the smallest amount he might state that £6 was paid to the defaulter on account of the society that he might deposit it in the bank. Subsequently it was found that he had only deposited £1 out of the £6, and no portion of the first-mentioned two sums of £15 had been paid into the bank. A copy of the society's rules was handed to the magistrate, and, after he had perused them, he stated that he was of opinion the provisions of the Friendly Societies Act would not apply to the Hull Carpenters and Joiners Association, because it seemed to him to have been formed for the purpose of supporting the members when on strike, in addition to carrying out the intentions of a benevolent society. Therefore, in consequence of that, and in view of the recent decision regarding trades' unions, he did not feel justified in interfering in the matter. Mr. Summers, in furtherance of his application, urged that there was only one rule of the society which might be said to have any reference to strikes, and that was the rule which stated that if any

¹ Instead of 'Hull Carpenters and Joiners Association' it should read the 'Hull 1st Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners'.

person held office in that society and was compelled on that account to leave his employment, he should, during such suspension from work, receive a stipulated sum per week. Mr. Travis again looked at the rules, when he said there were three or four which had a distinct reference to strikes, and therefore he should not grant the application.

The Hull decision was upon clause 7 in rule 18, you have said?—Yes.

Was the attention of the magistrate called to any other rule in your book on that occasion?—One or two others he referred to.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Were you present?—No, I was not at that time.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) Will you read us that clause to which you have referred?—‘Any free or non-free member or members leaving his or their employment under circumstances satisfactory to the branch or executive council shall be entitled to the sum of 15s. per week.’ Those are the words on which the magistrate decided that we were not entitled to the benefit of the 44th section of the Friendly Societies Act.

I understand by that rule that your executive council are enabled to withdraw a man from work on any pretext they may think satisfactory, and to allow him that sum weekly. That is so, is it not?—Yes.

Will you be good enough to tell us whether that is the only rule bearing upon that point in your book of rules?—That is really the only clause that we have which may be said to bear on strikes, or to have any connexion with strikes. But in the Hull case the magistrate selected a few words from clause 2 of rule 18. That, you will see, provides that a man shall receive a certain amount of donation in one given year, and it goes on to explain that if he has received the full amount in one year ‘he shall work four successive weeks before he can again claim donation, and must receive the average rate of wages of the town in which he is employed’. The intention of that is that if a man has received the full amount of donation in one year, that is to say, has been really out of work so long as to receive the £9 12s., he shall give some guarantee that he is not imposing on the society,

and the restriction is that a man shall find employment for four weeks before he can again claim donation. But unfortunately in the Hull case the magistrates used this rule against us, and at Bradford also; at the latter place we were asked what right we had to require any man to receive the average rate of wages.

What was the second case of yours which was decided?—It was a case that came on at Bradford on Friday, February 15th.

What were the particulars of that case? Did you apply for a warrant?—We applied for a warrant and had the man apprehended.

Was he treasurer or secretary?—Secretary; he had been entrusted with £40 on one occasion and £15 on another to take to the bank, and he spent the money.

You say that you had him apprehended?—Yes.

Before the magistrates what took place?—He was defended by an attorney, who stated that our rules were in restraint of trade. He pointed out this clause 7, rule 18, and said that clearly this case was analogous to that of the boiler-makers, and that we had no more right than they had to the protection of the Friendly Societies Act; the magistrates concurred, and dismissed the prisoner. We then applied for a case to the Court of Queen's Bench, and they declined the application. The following is the report of the trial:

THE ALLEGED CHARGE OF DEFRAUDING A TRADE SOCIETY AT BRADFORD.—Yesterday, at the Bradford borough court, William Close was brought up on remand from last Friday, on the charge of appropriating two sums, the one £40 and the other £15, the moneys of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners. Mr. Berry conducted the case for the prosecution, and Mr. Terry defended. At the outset of the case, Mr. Terry took a legal objection, nevertheless Mr. Berry addressed the bench at some length, maintaining that there was nothing in the rules of the society that debarred it from being looked upon merely as a benefit society, and, although admitting that there was one rule against the position he took, yet he contended, and quoted the Lord Chief Justice in support of his argument, that the existence of that

rule did not deprive the society of the privilege of proceeding against the prisoner, and of his asking the magistrates to make an order for the payment of the money by Close, and mulcting him in a penalty not exceeding £20, as provided by the Act. Mr. Terry took a different view of the matter, and argued that the society was essentially a trade organisation and nothing else. He said that it was absurd to ask the Bradford magistrates to override the opinion of the judges, given so late as the 16th January, in the Court of Queen's Bench, in the case of 'Hornby v. Close', and which had been brought before the court by the Boiler Makers Society. In that case the judges decided against the society, and this case was on a par with it. Mr. Berry stoutly asserted that there was no parallel in the two cases, and after a long argument, and the production of the rules, extracts from which were read, the Bench decided to discharge the prisoner on the ground that the society was not purely a benefit society within the meaning of the Act, and hence the prisoner could not be legally convicted of appropriating the money which it was alleged he had not accounted for to the society.

Have you recovered any portion of that money?—None whatever.

Was any other rule referred to on that occasion except clause 7 of rule 18?—Yes; the same one as was referred to in the Hull case.

The magistrates proceeded in fact on exactly the same grounds as the Hull magistrates proceeded on?—Yes.

Without stating the exact number of times (for I do not want you to consider that you are bound to absolute accuracy), in reference to that seventh clause, what number of times do you find it necessary to act upon it in the course of a year?—In round numbers a dozen times a year; that is, in general cases, where it involves a large number of men, say from 20 to 100 or more.

Can you refer us to any place in your balance sheet where we shall see the amount which the men receive under the liberty given by this clause 7 of rule 18?—You will find an item for trade privileges at page 90 of that annual report.

£1,941 8s. 1½d. Was the whole of that sum expended in a year under clause 7 of rule 18?—Yes.

And the whole expenditure of the year was £6,733?—Yes.

Then in that particular year it would appear that nearly a third of your expenditure was expended under that rule?—Yes, nearly a third.

Is that the common average?—No, it is not; and it requires an explanation. In addition to paying 15s. per week to members who are out of employment, under those circumstances, we assist our members in obtaining what we call privileges of trade, that is to say, summoning their employers when they refuse to pay them their wages, and when they discharged them without the notice which was agreed upon, there is the lawyer's fee, a guinea, and court expenses; sometimes we are successful and sometimes unsuccessful, but in all cases it entails a heavy expenditure, and we put down under that item all money spent in connexion with the trade privileges, as well as what is paid to members who are out of work under the provisions of that clause. But in all probability £100 or £200 of that particular sum may have been for law expenses.

(*Sir E. W. Head.*) Have you no means of distinguishing what portion of that went to the workmen directly under clause seven, and what portion went in contingencies of the sort you have mentioned?—Yes, we have printed balance sheets which detail every penny expended in every branch of the society; but in the annual report we do not think it necessary to give those details.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Amongst the privileges you talk of would you include a man having stood out against a master who had refused to raise his wages?—Yes, undoubtedly.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) Have you had any strike during the last year?—Yes, several.

(*Chairman.*) Was this money paid to men absent under strike?—A great portion of it.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) Have the strikes which have occurred in the last year been strikes in London?—No, we have not had one in London during the last year.

Where were they?—In Manchester there was a strike on a small scale (which resulted in a lock-out), and there were several others in different parts of the country.

I want to know whether, so far as your society is concerned, men are able to strike as they please, or how the strike is conducted, and how it is authorised. I want to discover how far this clause seven is a restraint on strikes, or how far it is an encouragement to them, and how were these strikes of the last year authorised, this one at Manchester, for instance?—The one at Manchester is perhaps not a fair case to take. The men there desired an advance of wages; they had given their employers notice for it, and the employers did not feel inclined to give it. The result was that the men decided to strike one shop. That shop was struck, and the employers met and resolved on a lock-out, which followed. Now that strike our executive council never sanctioned; they disapproved of a strike at that time on account of the monetary crisis. There was another society, however, in Manchester which had far more members than we had, and they struck without the sanction of their society, and were not supported from its funds. We were obliged to acknowledge the lock-out because our members were forced into it by a larger number. But that is not the way in which the strikes are generally brought about that our society has to deal with.

I understand you to say that on this occasion the members of your society and of some other society were concerned?—Yes.

And that your executive council and your society were against the strike?—Yes, our council disapproved of it.

And that the executive council, so far as you know, and the authorities of the other society, were also against the strike?—I will put it in this form, if you please, that the men connected with the other society struck without the consent of their society.

Was that consent given afterwards?—No, it was not; they had to support themselves on their own local resources.

But then your council allowed your members on strike (or rather locked out) the benefit of clause 7, rule 18?—Yes. The ground on which we allowed the claim was this, that our members, if they had been ever so willing, had not power to turn the result.

Then in fact on that occasion your society acted as far as it could against the strike?—I am not prepared to say that much

for our Manchester members, but as far as the council is concerned who have the power in this matter they did; and only granted the men support when they felt absolutely compelled to do so.

In fact they would have stopped the strike if they could?—If they could they would have stopped it, on account of the commercial depression.

What was the result of the strike?—The men got one half of what they asked then, and the other half they have received now, according to arrangement.

So that in fact that strike has been successful?—Yes.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) What did they strike for?—2s. a week advance, and 1s. of it they got then, with one hour reduction of time, and they get the other 1s. now.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) You have told us of a strike in which your society took no active part, is there any other strike of last year which has been sanctioned by your society, or which has been advised by your society?—I have been looking over the records of our society, and there is no special case of any particular interest that has taken place during the last year, but I have selected one from the year previous (which perhaps will serve the purpose) at Torquay. The members of our branch there sent in a printed notice in respectful language to the employers. I will read the document containing an epitome of the case, which was written by the branch secretary there. He says, 'In the first place the circular was sent to the employers on the 19th of October 1865, and the first week in March we received a letter from the secretary of their association asking a deputation to wait on them the next evening, which they did, but to no purpose. They only told them that they could not afford to give the money. The men then offered them arbitration, which they refused. The next week we met them again, but only got the same answer from them. Then you advised us to call a public meeting.' I would here take the liberty of explaining that I have always held that men have no right to strike, nor masters to lock-out, without first making the public acquainted with the causes that are likely to lead to a strike or lock-out, for I believe that the interests of the public are of much greater importance than either those of the masters or of the men, there-

for I hold that neither masters nor men have any right to run the risk of paralysing any branch of industry without consulting the public. Believing this, I advised the men to call a meeting, and lay a fair statement before the public, and say to them, 'You be the impartial judges, and tell us whether we are right or wrong.' They called this public meeting on the 28th of March, and a statement was laid before the public as to what the men really wanted. The letter goes on to say that a gentleman, an architect, Mr. E. Appleton, proposed as follows, 'That this meeting express our opinion that arbitration in matters of trade disputes is a desirable method of settling differences, and therefore urge the consideration of the subject upon masters and men'; (but prior to this it must be remembered the masters had refused arbitration when the men had offered it), 'and the majority of the meeting voted for it', and they then sent one of their men to the employers to give them information of the result; but subsequently the men in turn refused arbitration on the ground that the masters had refused it once, and that it was of no use asking them to accept it again or agree to it. They said in fact, 'We will refuse it, and have done with it.' The result was that the strike took place. The letter goes on, 'Mr. Eales told them that the builders had refused arbitration in the first place, and now we feel it our duty to do the same; but notwithstanding a few of us called the members together again on the 31st of March, and as the strike was to commence soon, we called the masters together at the same time, thinking to settle it that night, but the masters said that they could not afford to give' what was asked for.

What did they ask for?—3s. per week.

Did they ask for any alteration of hours?—No alteration of hours.

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) Have you any statistics to show what wages the men were then receiving?—You will find on page 7 of the annual report a tabulated form of all the towns in the United Kingdom, as far as our society is concerned, stating whether the men worked by the day or the hour, the number of hours worked per week during the summer, the number of hours worked during the winter, and the amount of wages which they receive in summer and winter.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Did the men make no demand about the time?—No demand about the time.

Merely 3s. advance?—Yes.

What was the former wage?—24s. they were receiving at that time, and this was an advance to 27s.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) I see that the average wage stated at page 8 is during the summer 24s., and during the winter 22s.?—Yes.

So that now you have got it up to 27s.?—Yes, 25s. in the winter and 27s. in the summer.

In this strike, then, the men obtained what they struck for?—In that instance, when our executive council found that the men had offered to meet the masters and settle the matter by arbitration, and that the masters had refused, they said, 'Call a public meeting, ask the public what they think about it, and be guided somewhat by their decision.' A resolution was passed at the meeting recommending arbitration, and the men, although at the meeting accepting the resolution, considered it would be useless offering it to the employers, and said, We will decline this arbitration which the meeting has recommended; there was nothing to show that the masters would have accepted it. Therefore the council considered that the men were entitled to support.

Have there been any strikes during the last few years in which the men have not gained their object?—Yes, one at Darlington.

Will you state the facts shortly?—The following is a history of that strike from the pen of one of the members engaged in it:—'I take this opportunity of placing before you an account of our proceedings from the commencement up to the present time. At a general meeting held the first week in February 1866, it was unanimously resolved to request an advance of from 27s. to 30s. per week, with an hour on Monday morning, and a code of working rules, notice to expire on the first Monday in April, and the enclosed memorial was sent with the notice. At the end of five weeks the secretary of the Masters Association "was instructed to inform us they objected to the terms, and thought they ought to have a word in making rules that they would have to be guided by". Our reply was that we were desirous to meet them by deputation to discuss said terms and rules. They never

deigned to answer our request, treating our offer to meet them with silent contempt. Finding, at the expiration of the two months notice, that instead of meeting us in a conciliatory spirit to try to arrange matters, they had rushed all the work off they possibly could in order to strengthen their position, it being evidently their intention to compel us to ask their pardon for expressing a desire to better our position. In our opinion our only course was to turn out, and endeavour to convince them that we were not to be treated with such contemptuous indifference with impunity. After we had been out a week, they requested an interview; we accordingly met them by deputation, and after an hour and a half's discussion they offered us sixpence an hour, which was an advance of ninepence per week, and 7 o'clock on Monday mornings. It is hardly necessary now to state that, smarting under their previous treatment, and fully conscious that at that time we were completely masters of the position, we declined the generous offer (had they made the offer before the notice expired a fortnight would have settled it). Of the course then pursued, we leave the comparative lightness of the expenditure to testify. About the 1st of May the towns of the North were visited by a delegate from the Birmingham Masters Association, and were amalgamated with them, he at the time promising to fill all their shops in a short time, which he has failed to do up to this time. At the same time was distributed the printed lists of those who came out on strike. After visiting the southern counties and Scotland in search of men, and failing, several of them candidly confessed they were beat, but they could not go against the association. How the failure of banks, &c., and consequent high rate of discount, the continental war, and the iron trade lock-out have eventually reversed our relative positions of masters of the situation, now belongs to the past. After a struggle extending over 23 weeks, seeing we were playing a losing game, after a sharp struggle to obtain a majority, the strike was closed, thinking it much better to try to maintain our position by getting as many of the old hands back to their several shops as possible rather than consulting mere personal feeling by keeping the town open for strangers, which would evidently have grown worse and worse as the back end advances. How it has resulted, so far as regards

we who were unanimously elected at a general meeting of the men to act as day committee, only exhibits the petty tyranny of narrow-minded individuals, who it is no self-praise to say have found themselves considerably overmatched on any and every point by men whom they affected to despise, but who of course cannot control the fluctuations of trade and capital, and other such like circumstances. After the close of the strike we waited on our old employer, and the result, you already know, was the production of the precious document to sign, confessing that we had been very naughty for endeavouring to obtain an advance of wages, but *to go and sin no more*—a suggestion too contemptible for any more serious consideration than it has already obtained.' The following notice of the matter, with a copy of the 'document', appeared in our monthly report for October, 1866, under the head of Trade Intelligence:—

The Darlington dispute has ended by the men resuming work without obtaining what they struck for. However unpalatable this may have been for our members, they had the good sense to see that circumstances were against them, and considered a 'good retreat better than a bad battle'. The following is a copy of a document presented to three of our members who had been elected by the Darlington Branch to conduct their business during the late dispute. We need hardly state that our members had a 'slight objection' to dignifying the document with their autograph, believing with us that the day for such nonsense is past. The three members alluded to will receive from our funds full wages till they obtain employment.

COPY OF DOCUMENT

Darlington, Sept., 1866.

We hereby promise and agree that, in consideration of our being again received into the employment of Messrs. Richardson & Co., we will not, so long as we remain in their employ, or in the town or neighbourhood of Darlington, take any part whatever in commencing, carrying on, or en-

couraging any movement for obtaining any alteration of wages, time, or rules for the workmen as a body, or for any other workmen, than each one of us for himself; and that in case of a strike among joiners taking place or being likely to take place, we will still continue at work as before.

Had the executive council justified their strike?—Yes.

And supported them in persevering in it?—Yes.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Reverting back to that strike at Torquay, was there any influx of business to the masters on that occasion?—We have our monthly trades reports, of which I have furnished the Commissioners with a copy, in which you will find the state of trade stated to be good, bad, or indifferent, as the case may be, from month to month and year to year; that is the ground on which we judge of the condition of the trade. In the particular case in question there was every reason to believe that the men were going to have a busy summer, and comparing things there with other towns near them, we felt that they were underpaid, and that the state of trade would warrant an increase of wages.

So that the strike really originated in Torquay out of the briskness of trade?—Yes.

And the briskness of trade on the part of the masters caused the men to ask for an increase of wages?—Yes.

Do the men in time of depression of trade ever mention to the masters a diminution of wages?—It is not very natural that men should mention it; but I can refer to instances where men have agreed to it when it has been mentioned to them by the masters.

Do not they usually refuse it?—Yes, they do not like a reduction of their wage, of course.

They take advantage of the briskness of trade on the part of the masters to ask for an increase of wage, but they do not like that the masters should take advantage (if you can call it an advantage) of the slackness of trade to lower the wage?—They do take advantage of a briskness of trade to ask for an increase, and they do not like a reduction any more than we suppose the employers like to pay an increase.

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) Will you explain to us a little more what control your central executive has over your branches?—In the

first place, there is a code of general laws issued for the guidance of the entire society. The branches have no byelaws, nor have they any need for any. The ordinary powers of the council are limited and defined. But in any case in regard to which the rules are really silent, the executive council has power to decide, and their decision is binding on the society. But if that decision is in any way objectionable, then the members by universal suffrage have a right to upset that decision, or to test whether it is agreeable to the wants and wishes of the majority of the members.

How is that done?—By issuing voting papers to every member of the society, on which he records his vote, stating whether he will be bound by the decision of the executive council in the particular case or not.

My question has not so much reference to any action that may be taken by the central executive under your rules, as to the influence of its opinion on the question whether there should be a strike or not. For instance, if one of your branches should propose a strike what power has the central executive over them? It is merely a matter of opinion I suppose. But you have referred to a case in which the men struck, and did so contrary to the opinion of the central executive; and yet it appears that in that case the central executive supported the men when they were on strike, notwithstanding that it was against their opinion that they should be on strike?—Yes, because in that case our men were so few in numbers compared with the large number belonging to the other society that we were obliged as a matter of expediency to support them, otherwise we should have been playing into the hands of the employers by forcing men to stop at work against their fellow men, or leaving them to their own resources if they left their work.

Do you think that you were justified in expending the funds of the society upon men who were on strike, although you believed the men to be wrong?—Yes, we felt justified, undoubtedly, because we did not think it right to see them suffer for what they were really not responsible for. As to the question what powers the council has over the branches, you will see on the first page of every monthly report the following words:—‘That in the event of the members of any branch of this society

being desirous of soliciting their employers for any new privilege they must first forward to the council full particulars of the privilege required. The council will immediately consider the same, and if circumstances warrant grant the application; but should the employers fail to comply with the request made, the branch so applying must again consult the council as to their future course. And under no circumstances will any branch be allowed to strike without first obtaining the sanction of the council, whether it be for a new privilege or against an encroachment on existing ones.' So that the council have full and absolute power to grant support to members in case of strike, and if they struck against the decision of the council, then the council would withhold support from them.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) What are the circumstances that the council consider to justify a strike, stating them in general terms?—I will mention a case in point. So far back as August 1866 the operative carpenters of Hull sent a request to the employers to allow them the Saturday half-holiday. The employers, in reply to that request, considered the application premature, but would consider it in the spring of 1867. The men were naturally led to suppose that in the spring of 1867 the employers would be prepared to consider the question. Therefore in order to give them plenty of time to consider it, on the 12th of last December the men sent a requisition asking them to grant the Saturday half-holiday. The following is a copy of the requisition:—'December 12th, 1866. To the secretary and members of the Master Builders Association. Gentlemen, we, the operative joiners of Hull, in special meeting assembled, think the time has arrived that we should enjoy the same privileges as the other branches of the building trade in reference to the Saturday half-holiday; and in submitting this to your notice ask you in a considerate manner to comply with our request, that is, that we cease work at 12 o'clock on Saturday, the same to commence the first full week in April 1867. We also at the same time submit to your approval a code of working rules to come into operation at the same time, if practicable. Respectfully requesting a reply as speedily as possible, we remain, gentlemen, yours obediently, on behalf of the committee, James Miller, chairman, W. McMillan, secretary. All communications to be ad-

dressed to W. McMillan, secretary, &c.' This communication, I may say, was from the members of the societies; but in most towns there are a number of non-society men, and, generally speaking, they get up a meeting of the non-society men in conjunction with the society men, and then they send in a general request. The general request in this case is as follows:—'Sir, we, the operative joiners of Hull, in special meeting assembled think the time has arrived that we should enjoy the same privilege as the other branches of the building trade in reference to the Saturday half-holiday; and in submitting this to your notice ask you in a considerate manner to comply with our request, that is, that we cease work at 12 o'clock on Saturdays, the same to commence the first full week in April 1867.' The employers did not reply up to the 15th of February, and the following is a copy of the note sent by the secretary of the men to remind them that they had not yet acknowledged the receipt of the requisition of the 12th of December previous:—'Sir, I am requested by the committee to express their surprise at not receiving any reply to the notice sent to you by them with reference to the half-holiday and the introduction of working rules, and they appeal to you as a matter of business to send a reply, also to refer you to the preface of the working rules submitted to you, wherein it is stated that should there be any difference of opinion with regard to any of the rules contained therein, they were desirous of meeting a deputation of equal numbers, to endeavour to arrive at some permanent decision. And the committee would state that from the expressed opinion of the operatives they (the operatives) would not feel satisfied until they are placed on the same footing as other branches of the building trade in Hull and other large towns. Hoping that instead of treating this with silence you will send a reply on or before the 28th instant, we remain, on behalf of the committee, W. McMillan, secretary.' I desire to call your attention to that clause which they allude to, asking for a certain number of masters to meet an equal number of men. The code of working rules which they sent contains a provision for the rates of wages, working hours, and other matters. In one of them they state 'that when any employer wants to quit any of his men he shall give one day's notice thereof, and the same notice be given by

the men to their employers. And payment to commence as soon as work ceases on pay-day; and if more than a quarter of one hour elapse between the time of leaving off work and the commencement of payment the time shall be charged for at the same rate as overtime. No payment to be made at a public-house or beershop.'

(*Mr. Hughes.*) Is not weekly notice the custom of the trade?—Yes, generally, but in some cases they agree to a day's notice, and in some cases to a notice of only a quarter of a day; but these are matters for the masters and men to agree upon between themselves. In addition to having rates of wages and working hours specified, there are several minor conditions embodied here, for instance, they say 'that these rules will not allow any workman to take work offered by a customer of any employer to execute after his day's work'. If a clever workman is sent out to do any job in a gentleman's house, perhaps the gentleman will say, 'If you will come and work for me in an evening at a lower rate you shall have as much work as you like to do.' But that is a thing which we do not tolerate at all, and it is not a thing that ought to be encouraged, for the result is that the man goes to his work next day perhaps half worn out, and we think that that is not fair to the employer, and therefore the provision is made that a man shall not be at liberty to do that. I have explained the general aims and objects of the 'code of working rules' proposed by the men for the consideration of the employers, which, when summed up, amounts to this: That the men desire to see adopted such conditions (on which the one may work and the other employ) as may appear mutually advantageous to masters and men, that both being affected by them, both shall have a voice in framing them, and they frankly and respectfully invite the masters to meet them to discuss and improve the working rules wherever improvement can be made.

Their reasons for desiring 'working rules' are important ones. In Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Halifax, and a great number of other towns 'working rules' exist, they bring employers and workmen more frequently together, small grievances are nipped in the bud, and large disputes thereby frequently prevented, and altogether a more sound, healthy feeling exists

between masters and men where such rules are in operation than where they are not.

I have also shown that the men are seeking to obtain the Saturday half-holiday, which (with the exception of the joiners) every other branch of the building trade in Hull has enjoyed for some time. I have shown too, that the men have given fair and timely notice of the alteration so that it might not interfere with any contracts their employers might have on hand when the request was first made. I have also shown that when in August 1866 the employers stated they could not grant the half-holiday, but would again consider it in the spring of 1867, the men agreed not to press their claim then but wait until the time named by their employers; and on December 12th sent in a respectful reminder with the proposed rules. That on the 15th of February they had not received even an acknowledgment of their reminder, and again wrote requesting a reply, and on the 18th of February they received the following:—

9 Somerstown, Holderness Road, Hull,
Feb. 18, 1867.

SIR,

I SUBMITTED the code of rules and note of the 12th December to the annual meeting of the Master Joiners Association on the 28th January.

For any delay which may be considered to have occurred in forwarding the resolutions passed thereon you may consider me personally responsible, press of other business having prevented me from giving it earlier attention.

After most careful consideration the meeting unanimously adopted the following resolution:—

‘That this meeting considering the present depressed state of the building trade, believes that any alteration in the hours of labour, involving, as it does, an increase in the price of labour, would tend still further to depress our branch of the trade, and therefore must decline to comply with that portion of the request; and that this meeting is of opinion that the code of rules proposed by the operatives is such an interfer-

ence with the rights alike of employer and employed that they decline to adopt them.'

I am, &c.,

ALFRED BROWN,
Hon. Sec.

Mr. W. McMillan.

At the earliest opportunity a meeting of the men was convened, the decision of the employers considered, and the following reply agreed to:—

March 7, 1867.

SIR,

I SUBMITTED the resolutions received from you (on the half-holiday question and rules) to the operatives. With reference to the first resolution they express great dissatisfaction with the reasons given for declining their request; they consider that the state of trade on the 28th January is no criterion to the state of trade in April next. Further that the increase in the price of labour is so slight that they are surprised that it should be given as the chief reason for not complying with their request, and they consider the way of dealing with the question far too summary, as no notice whatever was taken of their request with reference to meeting a deputation of equal numbers to discuss the matter, and they would take this opportunity of again pressing that part of their request, as they would wish to take every precaution to avoid a collision, at the same time desiring to put an end to the anomaly at present existing in the building trade. Hoping you will lay this before the Master Joiners Association so as to send us a reply on or before the 15th instant.

W. McMILLAN.

The 'anomaly' alluded to is that the workmen in the other branches of the building trades should leave work at noon on Saturday, and the joiners continue at work till 4 p.m.; and are frequently sneered at and taunted for doing so by their more fortunate co-workers.

In reply to the last letter of the workmen the following has been received:

ROBERT APPLGARTH'S EVIDENCE

9, Somerstown, Holderness Road, Hull,
March 8, 1867.

SIR,

YOURS of the 7th to hand. I shall have pleasure in laying it before a meeting of the Master Joiners Association, but I fear I shall not be able to send you reply by the date you name (15th). You may rely, however, on my giving the matter my best attention.

Yours, &c.,
ALFRED BROWN.

Mr. McMillan.

I have traced this matter almost up to the present date, and have now only to add that the grounds on which our council consider a strike justifiable in this case are these:—

Firstly. Because that when the employers declined to grant the Saturday half-holiday in August 1866, the men did not press their claim, but waited till the time fixed by the employers for a re-consideration of the matter.

Secondly. Because the request made by the men for the half-holiday is a reasonable and proper one, and an advantage enjoyed by the workmen in every other branch of the trade in that town and is fast becoming general throughout the country.

Thirdly. Because the men have taken no advantage of the employers, have given due and proper notice of what they required, and have offered in a respectful manner to meet the employers to discuss and settle in a friendly manner any points of difference between them (and thus done their best to avoid a dispute). This the employers have not agreed to or in fact noticed up to the date of their communication of February 18th.

Fourthly. Because the objection made by the employers to granting the half-holiday is not a valid one; we do not think that to grant it would have the depressing effect the employers state, but believe that the public would as cheerfully pay such prices for the work done by the joiner as would enable him to enjoy the Saturday half-holiday, as they at present do in case of the mason, the bricklayer, the plasterer, and others, and as for the state of trade it is well known to be steadily improving.

Fifthly. That for years past the men in our trade as a rule throughout the country have worked longer hours and received

less wages than the masons and bricklayers, while the labour of a joiner is far more skilful and his working tools 75 per cent. more expensive than theirs, and we have had ample proof that the advantages they have enjoyed (and which we have not) may be attributed to the fact that their efforts in the past have been more united than ours. But we, having now an efficient organisation, think it only right that we should use it to our advantage, and the past four years have produced abundance of evidence as to what it enables us to do when wisely used, therefore, for these general reasons, as well as the special ones, we think a strike justifiable in the Hull case if all other means fail.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) You do not approve of men working for customers of their employers? Is not that interfering between the man and the employer?—No; I think it is protecting the employer.

I am looking at it as it affects the public. Supposing that I found a clever artisan in my house, and said to him, ‘Now I see that you are a clever workman, I should like you to come and work for me,’ why should you interfere?—We do not attempt to interfere in that way; but if you had a man working in this house and he was working for an employer, and you knew that by offering that man your job to do he would do it at less price, we do not think it fair that the man should be allowed to undermine his employer’s interest in that way.

If the employer asks me £2 a week and the man does the work for £1 15s., why should you interfere to prevent me from employing the man?—We have a strong notion that there are so many evils connected with that way of acting, that we had better say that we do not allow the men to interfere with their employer’s interest. The man’s business is to work at the bench side, and the master’s business is to take work from the public.

...

(*Sir E. W. Head.*) Are we to understand that that rule of not suffering a man to work for a private customer of his employer is maintained by the society in the interest of the employers?—Solely in their interest; it could not be to our interest. The fact is that we have found that the employers have met us in this way sometimes: they say, ‘There are lots of your men that take work from our customers to do of an evening’, and in all such

cases we consider the employer has a just ground of complaint; and we say, 'We will put our veto upon that proceeding.'

Then you consider, do you, that your society is exercising its proper function in protecting the employer as well as the workman?—Yes.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) So that you do really interfere with a man's judgment of his own interests; you say, We the trade interfere and tell you that you shall not be governed by your own judgment?—In matters like that we believe it to be on the whole very injurious for the men to act in that way.

What do you mean by 'injurious'?—We believe that when a man has done a day's work he has done sufficient.

Do you not suppose that he is a better judge of that question than you?—No, we do not; we believe that the men are thoroughly selfish who act in that way.

How should you like me to interfere with you as you interfere with those men?—If you were a member of my society, and you, in conjunction with a majority, decided that I must conform to certain regulations, I should be bound to do so; but if we are all to be left to do as we like the sooner we dissolve our society the better.

Is not that bringing the opinion of the majority in all cases to govern mankind?—Undoubtedly, and I see no reason against it.

Then you think that the minority should have no voice?—Undoubtedly, let them have a voice, and if they have right on their side let them agitate till they convince the majority they are right.

But who is to decide whether they have right on their side?—The same remark may be applied to the question of the suffrage, about which I suppose we shall have to go on agitating till we get what we wish.

Here is, we will say, an individual man who has a peculiar power, who is in fact a genius; you interfere with him and say, Your genius shall not help you, we will bring you down to the mediocrity of the society?—That is a mistake. I would ask whether it adds to a man's genius to overtax his own strength.

Is not he the best judge of that question?—No, I think not.

So that you would have the society a nursing mother to

genius?—I would have a man do a fair day's work for a fair day's wage.

And that is the rule you lay down in your society, is it?—Yes, and as far as we are able we carry it out.

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) Have you any rule in your society against overtime by employers?—No. If the employers mutually agree to such a rule, then it will become binding so far as that town was concerned, but our rules have nothing whatever to do with these. I was merely giving a specimen of a rule as it emanates from the men to the employers.

Then you do not prevent your members working overtime for their employers?—No, we do not, but we have a great objection to it, and to piecework, in particular.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) What is your objection to piecework?—The introduction of piecework leads to the introduction of bad material.

What do you mean by that? Will you illustrate the statement?—Thin wood instead of thick, for instance; bad bricks instead of good, or bad mortar instead of good.

If I engage to lay a certain number of bricks a day, and am paid by the number I lay, does that introduce bad material?—It has a tendency to introduce bad material.

How?—I will speak with reference to my own trade, for those who come after me will be better able to speak for their trades than I can. For instance, in the outskirts of London there are many villa residences put up by the piece. The general rule is for the employer to give a certain price for the work, and that a very low price, and they know well that the men cannot make the same rate of wages that men can get in a shop in London. The consequence is that the men have to work so much longer and to make more exertion. The employers know the men exert themselves to throw the work together as speedily as possible, and at every opportunity they introduce indifferent material. Now, as an instance, what we term the treads (those are the boards you tread on coming upstairs) of the stairs in all good buildings are the same thickness at the back as they are at the front. You see the round edge, and that should be the thickness of the board from back to front. They make a practice here in London, and in some parts of the country also, of having the

boards cut aslant in such a way that the thickness is not the same throughout. Now, when these men work by the piece their object is to get the work as quickly thrown together as possible, and having this desire they will cover up and hide bad material, and the employers know this, and hence they introduce it. That is only one instance, but many others might be given.

I only ask you these questions for information sake, but I think there is a point which you have not directed your mind to. Supposing a very good workman—for instance, such a sculptor as Praxiteles—were to come to me and say, ‘I will make you a statue of Venus, and I must ask so much money for it,’ that is doing work by the piece. You, as I understand, would interfere and say, ‘No, you must work on the same terms as Thomas Smith, and not work by the piece’?—I do not admit that that is a fair application of the principle. We are not all Arkwrights, Brunels, or Stephensons. Men of such extraordinary talent soon become other than working men. We have to make rules and regulations which shall apply to workmen generally, and wherever we find a man who has extraordinary ability we always find him in some position of responsibility and trust, and therefore it is that we delight in assisting such a man. These piece work regulations that you seem to object to would not apply to a case of that kind at all; they do not tend to bring down the men of superior genius.

Take the case of a man of inferior ability to the great name I have mentioned; take a carver in wood and take it in your own case. I will suppose he is of the bettermost sort of workmen, that he can do his work more rapidly than, we will say, Thomas Smith by his side. You would interfere with him; you would say, ‘No, you are not so great a man as to take yourself out of the rest of mankind; we will reduce you to the mediocrity of our standard?’—No, nothing of the kind. It does not follow, because we set our faces against piecework, that one man is not to have more pay than another. When there is a man of first-class ability, whether he is working by the day, or the hour, or the week, or the month, his employer can and frequently does single him out and give him a higher rate of wages, even where piecework is prohibited.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) You do not object to the employer doing that, do you?—Not in the least.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) But that does away with your notion of piece-work, I apprehend?—Not in the slightest. We object to piece-work, because it leads men to neglect their homes, to work too long hours, and to attend more to work than to the education of themselves and their families. We believe that it deters men from pursuing educational and other matters which really they should attend to.

So that if a man can do half as much work again as the ordinary race of men, you say that he shall not take advantage of that peculiarity which nature has given him?—Yes, he can take advantage of any such peculiarity. He may work as hard as he likes, and generally speaking the employer will single him out and give him a higher rate of wages.

That takes him out of your rules, but so long as he is under your rules the man of great capacity is reduced to the standard of your society, is he not?—I really cannot see how you can make it appear so. . . .

(*Mr. Harrison.*) You have spoken of the executive of the society sanctioning on consideration a strike. Is the executive in the habit of suggesting and counselling a strike?—It never does so.

Is it the case that the executive for the most part does not sanction the applications to strike which it receives, or what proportion of them are refused?—About one-third, as near as I can recollect, of our applications during the past four years have been refused.

On what principles does the executive proceed when it considers the desirableness or the reasonableness of an application to strike? What data have you for examining the state of trade, and on what principles do you come to a decision?—We have before us the monthly reports, compiled out of returns which are carefully filled in by the branch secretaries all over the country, sent to the general office, and then compiled by myself and issued again to the branches, stating the condition of trade in each locality and the number of member unemployed. These are carefully preserved from year to year. In addition to that we have a table of statistics as to the rate of wages they are

receiving, and the number of hours they are working for those wages, and the general conditions of their work. These statistics are referred to, and they are compared with the price of provisions and the conditions under which other branches are working. We have a correct record month after month and year after year of the state of trade in any given town. We will take, for instance, Liverpool. We have a record which has been kept ever since the society has been in existence, telling us how the trade has been in Liverpool each month during that time, and we know the rate of wages that the men have received, and the number of hours they have had to work for them. When they apply for leave to solicit an increase of wages we say, 'Liverpool is working under such conditions; what is Sheffield doing? what is Manchester doing? what is London doing?' and then we consider the question whether Liverpool has got its fair share of wages when compared with the other towns.

When you say the state of trade, does that mean the price that the article is fetching?—No; I am referring particularly now to whether trade is brisk or dull in our particular line.

Does not the price that work is fetching afford you the indication of what ought to be the rate of wages?—We have no means of knowing what price our employers' work is fetching.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) You take the cases where the men in your trade are well employed to guide you in your decision?—Yes. . . .

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Can you bring anything to show whether strikes have been more frequent or less frequent since the time that your society has been in vigour, as compared with the time when it was not in full operation, or as between districts where your society has not many branches compared with districts where it is strong in branches?—As far as my experience goes strikes have been rather more frequent, but on a very small scale, during the last four years. I have not ascertained accurately what strikes there have been outside of our own society; but taking the past 10 years previous to the existence of our society I think that certainly, so far as I am able to judge, there would be more strikes then than now; yet during the last four years they have been frequent, but of very short duration.

Can you compare the strikes in districts to which your society does not extend or in which similar societies are not in existence with those in districts where your society is strong?—We have no means of getting accurate information. Generally speaking, men not in association accept terms less favourable than the men in association.

Do you consider that the existence and the strength of your society has done much to raise the rate of wages and to shorten the hours of labour in different towns, and have you constructed any table showing the average increase in this respect?—You will find that on page 10 of the last annual report, I make the following remarks on the tables which show the increase of wages and the reduction of working hours which has taken place. I say, 'The preceding table and summary contain much valuable information, and also present facts which are as remarkable as they are encouraging. During the past year no less than 52 different towns have obtained an advance of wages, varying from 8s. to 4s. per week. In 30 different towns the members have obtained a reduction in their working hours, varying from half an hour to five hours per week; and it is worthy of special remark that, since the opening of a branch of this society in Bradford, the working hours of that town have been reduced $8\frac{1}{2}$ per week, and an advance obtained of 1s. per week, and this at the cost of a few shillings.'

Can you show that that result is due to the existence of the society?—I can only say, so far as Bradford is concerned (taking that as an instance), there was no other society in existence, that our men were continually agitating in a very business-like manner with their employers, and that the result has been, as here stated, that they have got their hours reduced and the wages increased.

Could you mention any two towns where the circumstances are sufficiently alike to show that in the town where your society has been strong a rise of wages or some other advantage has been gained, while in the other town where your society was not strong, and where, so far as one can see, there was the same reason *cæteris paribus* for those advantages being gained, they have not been gained?—Yes; if you refer to the table of statistics at page 8 you will find that in Sheffield we have one of

the largest branches of our society, in summer they are at work $57\frac{1}{2}$ hours for £1 10s. per week, and $52\frac{1}{2}$ hours in winter for £1 8s. per week. Now at Rotherham, which is only a few miles from Sheffield, and where our society is weak, in the summer they get 4s. less and in the winter 2s. less than the men at Sheffield, and they also work in the winter longer hours than the Sheffield men do.

Could you mention any other instances of the same kind?—I believe that a number of instances could be selected from those tables.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) And you assumed that those facts are a proof of the great advantage of your society?—Yes.

You do not know the effect that the society has had upon the employers I suppose?—No; in a selfish world the employers look out for their own interests as well as we for ours.

The fact that the society is doing what is favourable to you is not a proof that it is doing what is favourable to the public?—No, it may not be a proof. . . .

(*Mr. Harrison.*) You have spoken about the locomotion of your trade, that is to say, about sending men to places where more workmen were wanted; will you briefly describe the system which your executive adopt in supplying men to a district where there is a want of labour?—When the monthly returns come, on or about the 6th of each month, into my hands I run down the reports to find where men are wanted and where men are out of employment. I then take the earliest opportunity possible of writing to the secretaries in the towns where men are out of employment to tell them where men are wanted, and we make a practice of paying the railway or steamboat fares of the men that are out of employment when we send them to the places where men are wanted.

Are they bound to go?—No, not if a man gives anything like a reasonable excuse for not going.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Do you transport the man's family as well as the man himself?—No; in those cases it is a temporary thing; we consider that a man is better off 100 miles away in full work than staying at home with 10s. a week.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Are you or your branch secretaries ever applied to by employers or their agents to provide men for

them?—Yes, frequently. There is an instance mentioned by Mr. Beesly, in the *Fortnightly Review*. In the March number of that review he gives a history of the everyday life of our society from the commencement up to the present time. There was a case in a little out-of-the-way place near Dorking, where an employer who was building a large house wanted more men; he could not get any and he applied to our Dorking secretary, and the secretary wrote down to Manchester, where there was a lock-out, telling them to send men, they did so, and we paid their expenses to Dorking from the society's funds.

You consider then that the society does something to supply labour in the places where it is wanted, and to draw it away from those where it is not wanted?—Certainly; it is a common thing for the foremen in all parts of the country to make application to our secretaries. They can not only depend on having men from us, but they know that the men are good workmen and of good moral character.

With reference to the last remark, what guarantee is there that the members of your society are men of good character in their trade?—There is a fine inflicted upon the proposer or seconder of any man if he knowingly introduces to the society a man who is unfit to become a member of it, and the rules require that they shall possess that qualification.

Do you consider that the best men in your trade are members of your society or not?—They are as a rule, members of trade societies.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Supposing that there was a job going on, and that 15 of the men engaged on it were of your society, and that five were not of your society, would it often happen that your 15 men would render the state of the five men very uncomfortable?—Never, so far as our society is concerned, have we heard of an instance where a member has objected to work with a non-society man, or attempted systematically to make it unpleasant for a non-society man to work with him; and if any special case could be brought to the notice of the executive council where that had been done, we should as soon take proceedings against a member of our society who had done so as we would against an employer who had acted unfairly towards our men.

That being your statement, if it should appear that even here in London such things do happen, you would be very much surprised, and I think you would allow that there was a want of power in your society that that should occur?—Cases may occur that we do not hear of.

May it not be that you do not hear of them because you do not wish to hear of them?—No, we are only too glad to get hold of any information of the kind, if it is to be had.

Supposing it should happen that instances come before us hereafter of such transactions having occurred, you will be very much surprised?—We shall not be very much surprised, but we shall be quite prepared to deal with them as we should have dealt with them if they had come to our knowledge in the first instance.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Have you had cases of intimidation brought to your notice on the part of one member over another, or of one member over a non-member?—We never had a case of the kind.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) So that we may say that in the case of the carpenters and joiners the thing has never happened?—I am speaking only of my own society, which has been in existence since June 1860, and I say that such a thing has not happened in our society. I do not speak of any other society.

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) Is there any other large society in your own trade?—There is what is called the general union; that has more members than ours, but not so many branches.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Have you ever heard, in the case of that society, of anything having occurred like what I have referred to?—Yes.

Does your memory call to mind any one instance?—I remember a case at Bolton, where some members of that society threatened to strike against one of our members because he was not a member of theirs and refused to join them. He said, in the Lancashire dialect, 'Well, if you do I'll fill t'shop,' meaning that he would go back to Bury and fill up their place with members of his own society.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Has it ever come to your knowledge since you have been secretary of the society that any practice analogous in any way to that of rattening at Sheffield has been practised in your trade?—Yes.

What is the practice?—As far as my experience of trade matters goes, the rattening that we have heard of only in reference to the Sheffield trades is common to every trade, and what is meant by rattening is that if a man renders himself objectionable to those he is working with they try to make it unpleasant to him in some way or other. I will mention an instance of rattening that took place at a large job at Trollope's, in Pimlico. Two men were discussing over their breakfast, and one struck the other. On that occasion the other men agreed amongst themselves to 'Put the man in Coventry' for a month who had struck the other—that is to say, not to speak to him at all. Every man on the job pledged himself under the penalty of a fine not to speak to him, and they did not speak to him during that month. They faithfully carried out their decision. That is the mildest form of rattening, and that is common to all trades. Again, it is the practice in many trades to remove a man's working tools, not to steal them. Now, that is a thing which I do not sanction or believe in at all, and it is a thing that is very fast dying out, but it is only fair to the Sheffield trades to say that it is not peculiar to them. I believe these practices are to be found amongst the trades that may be considered the most highly educated trades.

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) You have a great many offences mentioned in your rules as subject to fines; have you any fine for a man acting in the way you have described, using violence, or making himself disagreeable in any way to another man with whom he may be working?—We do not take cognizance of the conduct of members, so long as it has not any connection at all with the matters, pertaining to the society, unless it be that they are guilty of felony.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Striking a man in the face has nothing to do with your society, as I understand you, then?—No; I mean that we have no rule whatever to enforce a penalty in a case of the kind I have mentioned.

You spoke of rattening, and made use of the mild phrase of 'removing' not 'stealing' tools. Now removing tools from a man I suppose takes away his power of doing his work?—Yes.

And therefore deprives him of his wages?—Yes.

And therefore reduces him to starvation?—Yes, it may be carried out to that extent.

That is rather a heavy result, is it not?—It is, but you will remember that I said I did not agree with the practice.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Does your society officially recognise the practice?—Certainly not.

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) Do they discourage it?—They do discourage it.

What steps do you take to discourage anything of that kind?—I can mention an instance; one of our members was working at Cambridge at a job for Mr. Myers, of London. The men there attempted to make him pay a footing, a most objectionable thing to the man. He did not pay for the first week or two, and then he declined I think the next. At all events some of his tools were hid. The man came to the branch and complained. The case was referred to the executive council, and they said, 'If the workmen on that job have done so he shall have all the protection which our funds can afford, and we will render him support, and if we could find out who had hid his tools we should take the case into a court of law.' That is a case which we have now under consideration, and if we find out the man who hid the tools we shall make an example of him.

No such case has come before you since you have been on the management of this society, as I understand you?—Never one.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) You have spoken of the customs of the trade. Are there many towns in which a code of rules agreed upon between the employer and the employed is in force?—Yes.

Does the society desire to extend that, or do you consider that a beneficial state of things?—We are doing all we can to extend it; we believe that nothing can be more advantageous than for the masters and men to meet and agree upon certain conditions, and we think that it should be a matter left to themselves.

Have you any evidence that that has acted beneficially upon the state of the trade, that any town, for instance, has been the better for it since it has been enforced?—Yes. There is a very remarkable instance at Sheffield. Our society has been in existence since March 1862 in that place. They were receiving then 26s. per week, and working 58½ hours, and receiving the

same rate of wages in winter as in summer. After our branch had increased there, the men began to think that they were not so well paid as men in other towns, and they applied to the masters for more. It was not settled without a dispute, they had a strike of some few weeks, and then they got what they desired, including a code of working rules. Since that they have had many meetings with their employers, and the employers were well satisfied with the conduct of the men, and expressed themselves so. It happened that the masons and other branches of the building trade had asked for and obtained the Saturday half-holiday, and our men thought it was not fair that they should work longer than the others, so they went to the employers, simply instructed by a resolution of our branch, to ask the employers if they would grant the half-holiday. The employers said, 'Yes, we will,' and a short time afterwards granted it. They said, 'what is more, we have a suggestion to make to you carpenters.' We are well satisfied with the manner in which you have met us during the last few years on trade affairs, but there is one thing that we should like to suggest to you, and that is, that we should have a board composed of an equal number of masters and men, and that any little grievance on the part of either one or the other should be submitted to this board so composed, thus preventing our getting into a large dispute; 'we will agree to appoint a number of masters if you will appoint an equal number of men.' The men went back to those who had sent them, and they gladly accepted that proposal, and there has been no such thing as a strike since that board of arbitration was established; there is not a town of England where, taking into consideration the working hours and the wages and price of provisions, the men work on better conditions than they do in Sheffield.

(*Chairman.*) Do you mean that the men are paid higher and that provisions are cheaper?—I mean that taking into consideration the amount of wages received, the number of hours they work for that amount of wages, and the price of provisions, there are no men in the trade better off. I think that the manner in which the employers met the men may be attributed to this fact. When I left Sheffield some five years ago they were receiving 26s. per week the year round. The employers felt this

was unfair, as the time worked was so much shorter during the winter, and they said to the men, 'You ask for more wages, but you have an advantage in getting the same rate in the winter as in the summer.' The men said, 'We will agree to 2s. less in the winter time than we receive in the summer.' This showed a desire on the part of the men to deal fairly with their employers, and they have benefited by so doing, for at one of the last interviews they held with their employers, it was agreed, on receiving proper notice, to give the men an additional 2s. per week if the state of trade would warrant it; this the men had not asked for. . . .

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) There are rules in your society printed and put before the public, are there any hidden rules?—We have often been told, sometimes by employers and sometimes by the public, that it is our written and not the printed rules that caused the mischief. Now, our 'written rules' are here for your perusal; these books before me are the minute books of the society, and they contain nothing but what we should desire to see printed, nothing but what gentlemen here are at liberty to print and make public, so far as they think proper.

You are a Sheffield man, I think?—I have been in Sheffield many years.

Did you ever hear of a rule by which so much is paid for cutting off a man's finger?—I never heard of such a monstrous rule, and would not believe that it existed.

Going still further, you never heard *à fortiori* of so much given for cutting off a man's hand?—No, never; nor would I believe that such a rule had ever an existence. You would not believe it if anybody came here and stated it?—No; I would believe it if I saw it in writing.

But supposing that the rule is not to be found in writing and yet that it practically exists?—I would ask how it can be called a rule if it is not to be found in writing. . . .

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Have you in any place within your knowledge any understood custom of your trade the object of which is to limit the amount of work which a man is to do in a day?—Not in the slightest.

(*Chairman.*) Is there any written rule forbidding a joiner working over hours or by the piece; do you fine a man for that?—No.

Is there any understood rule against working over hours or by the piece?—No, there is nothing of that in our rules; but when men in any particular locality like to make any such arrangement with their employers, and it is acceptable to the employers as well as the men, then of course it is binding on both parties.

You say you have no rule against working by the piece?—No.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) How comes it then that I find here 'that no piecework is allowed in any class of work'?—That is in a code of working rules submitted by the men of the branch to their employers, and not in the rules of our society, and if the employers accept it, it will be binding upon both.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Are those rules binding upon society and non-society men in the district?—No, they are only binding upon those who are parties to the agreement.

Who would be parties to the agreement?—The society of the men on the one hand, and the masters on the other; but where masters and men in association make conditions, the non-society men comply with them.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) But looking at this paper which you have put into our hands, it does not seem to me that the acceptance of these rules by the masters is wanted in order to make the rules binding, because I find here, 'We, the carpenters and joiners of the Potteries and Newcastle district consider,' and so on?—You will please understand that those are purely suggestions from the men to the masters, and along with them is sent a circular. In the case of the Hull men they sent a circular, and in that circular are the following words: 'In laying them before you, we would state that up to the present time no particular rules have been adhered to, and disputes have arisen which by better regulations would in all probability have been avoided, and we desire to prevent any unpleasantness or dispute in the future. We therefore hope and believe that in submitting them to you on friendly terms they will be received in the same spirit, and meet with your approbation. Should there not be an unanimity of opinion on any matter herein proposed, we should be glad to meet a deputation of equal numbers, at any time and place you may appoint, to discuss in a calm and careful manner the

merits or demerits of anything herein contained, so that we may be able to arrive at a satisfactory result, alike agreeable to employers and employed.' They are purely suggestions.

Are these suggestions favoured by your society?—Undoubtedly; but they are issued by the branches in that locality.

And amongst those suggestions of your society one is, 'that no piecework be allowed in any class of work'?—True.

And 'that no overtime be made except in cases of emergency'?—Yes. At the same time the men in London and other places are prepared to repudiate that entirely, for the conditions which are found necessary in one locality are considered unnecessary in another.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Until that code of regulations is agreed to and accepted by the masters the executive of your society would not support the men in striking for them, I presume?—Certainly not.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) You state that advisedly do you?—Certainly; we would not sanction a strike to enforce those rules if they had not been agreed to by the employers.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) The society suggests that masters and men should agree to those rules, but until both sides have agreed to them you would not sanction a strike for them?—That is the case.

(*Mr. Booth.*) How are you able to say that you would not sanction a strike?—If the men in the Potteries district sent us word that the employers had refused to adopt, but that they meant to insist on this piecework regulation, we should tell them that we should not support them, because we have no binding law to say that piecework shall be prohibited.

Are you speaking of your own individual opinion?—No, I say that under the very highest authority.

What authority?—The authority of the executive council, who alone have the power to decide that men shall have support or not.

Where is that authority expressed?—You will find in rule 13 the powers of the executive council. It is not expressly provided that in this, that, and the other case they shall have this, that, and the other power, but they have a general power given to them.

(*Chairman.*) Is that expressed or is that understood?—It is not expressed.

I asked the question because I do not find any power under which the executive council could order men out. If they think there ought to be a strike, do they send down word?—No, they are the last to send down word to order a strike. When they are appealed to they ask for good cause to be shown for the necessity, and when it is shown do they sanction the strike. . . .

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) Have you any rule as to wages?—Simply that a man to be a member of our society shall receive the average rate of wages. I will read a few words from one of our rules which was quoted in the Bradford police court. It is there stated that a member 'must receive the average rate of wages given in the town in which he is employed.'

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Here is a man, suppose of superior power and intelligence, and he makes 24s. a week; do you mean to say that his rate of wage is the average rate of wage?—No, his would be above the average.

What is the average rate of wage?—The rate which is generally paid in the district, that which is generally agreed upon by the employers and workmen to be the general rate of wages. That is a thing which can be soon ascertained. In any shop full of men you can soon find out how their wages generally run.

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) What is at this moment the minimum rate of wages which you allow any of your members to receive in London?—8d. an hour.

If they work for less than 8d. an hour do they cease to be members of your society, that is to say, are they expelled?—No. We have found that there are many young men who come up from the country to London who are not used to London work, but are good and useful men. Now some were of opinion that it would be better to set our faces against every man who did not receive as high a rate of wages as we were receiving, but of late a more comprehensive policy has prevailed, and the men say, 'No, it is better to take them by the hand; it is better to help them to earn the higher rate of wages than blame them for getting the lower.' There are however many societies that do not accept members unless they are getting a certain rate, but

we find it advantageous to take the men in, even if they get rather less at first.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) You rather set your faces against a man who takes under-wages, do not you?—If a man knowingly takes less than the rate we do set our faces against that, because it tends to bring down the wages of all the men, except in such a case as I have just named.

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) In the case of trade being slack do you often insist upon that rule with your own members?—We are very careful in accepting reduction of wages, as I think we ought to be, but there have been cases during this severe depression of trade when we have counselled our men to work short time and thus take less wages, and in other cases they have done it without asking.

And they have not been expelled from your society for so doing?—Certainly not.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) As I understand you you say that before a man is admitted to the society he must have been five years at the trade?—Yes.

Does that include his apprenticeship?—Yes.

And the term of apprenticeship in the trade is five years?—It varies, but five years is considered sufficient to admit him into our society.

So that a man can join your society immediately when he leaves his apprenticeship?—Yes, if he has served five years.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Supposing a man did not need that term of apprenticeship, but was a heaven-born carpenter, would you adhere to your rule?—If a man has been five years at his trade it is a guarantee that he has learned it, but in case before that a man had sufficient ability to earn the wage and could prove it, we should have no hesitation in admitting him.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) In practice does the existence of your society in your opinion prevent efficient men from making the best of their skill?—Certainly not; there never was a greater absurdity than that notion.

(*Mr. Booth.*) Is there any rule in your society restricting the number of apprentices that may be employed?—None.

Is any such rule observed in practice?—If there is any in practice it is not in the general rules, but in these working rules

the men put whatever they like into them, and it rests between them and their employers as to whether they are adopted.

Does your society aim at limiting the number of apprentices?—No, it aims at nothing of the kind, and I believe that our trade could absorb a great deal of the surplus labour which some other trades could do very well without, for our trade is a very progressive one.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) I suppose you know that there are other trades which limit the number of apprentices?—Yes.

(*Chairman.*) And other trades which limit the amount of work which may be done in a given time?—I have never known that, although I have heard the thing said.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Have you ever heard of a rule amongst the bricklayers that a man shall change his trowel from his right hand to his left while he is laying down the bricks?—I have heard of it, but I never saw the rule.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Have you any similar rule in your trade?—No.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Have you any doubt about the existence of the rule amongst the bricklayers which I have just mentioned?—A considerable amount of doubt.

Are you prepared to state to this Commission that you do not believe that such a thing exists?—I will not say that such a thing does not exist, but I have very great doubts about it. I have never seen it in print; if anyone can show it me in print I will believe it. But I have heard so many accusations made against trades unions which I know from my own experience to be utterly without foundation, that I do not attach much importance to rumour.

If it should appear that that has been and is in fact now enforced, that will show you so far that you are ignorant of some things that occur amongst the trades unions I presume?—It is quite possible that I may be ignorant of many things, and I shall be glad to acknowledge my error when I know that I am in error.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) If a non-member of the society desires to work in a way which is contrary to some local rule or to some rule of this book, as for instance, if he wishes to work overtime, or on piecework, is he at liberty to do so; I mean, does the union

interfere with his liberty?—Not in any way whatever; we have no provisions for any interference of the kind.

In effect does it directly or indirectly annoy or molest that man or those men in working on those conditions for any master who may employ them?—I know no town where it has been the practice to annoy such men; but I do know that in every town where the men of the union are strong they use every means in their power to induce non-society men to join the society. I know that at Manchester, in our society, the men make a practice of waiting at the shop doors and asking those that come out whether they are going to join our society or the other.

If a member of the union finding, for instance, that he could work a great many more hours than was stated in the rules, that being a strong man and a very skilful man he could work piece-work or overtime in the way not recognised by the rules, and if for that purpose he proposed to leave the union, could he do so without molestation?—Yes, certainly; we say to every man, 'When you are no longer willing to work under the rules you must leave us.'

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Would there not in such a case be that milder form of rattening of which you have spoken already?—I am not prepared to say that it would not be done in the workshop, but the society countenances nothing of the kind.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Then the restriction upon freedom of labour which your society imposes amounts to this, that the members of the society will voluntarily consent to work under certain conditions so long as they receive certain benefits?—Certainly.

And if they choose to work under different conditions they must forego those benefits and leave the society?—Yes.

(*Chairman.*) If they have subscribed for a certain number of years, and then wish to emancipate themselves from your rules, can they obtain from you any aliquot part of the funds of the society with which to withdraw?—They are not allowed to withdraw anything, but the chances are that they may have had in benefits ten times what they have paid in contributions.

The individual member must look out for his own interests then?—Yes.

(*Mr. Booth.*) You would not allow a workman, would you, to

be a member on the terms of your society as they are stated in the printed book, at the same time reserving to himself the right to take work on conditions which he thought fit?—He must comply with our rules, in which there are general conditions laid down and thought to be mutually advantageous.

(*Sir E. W. Head.*) And those conditions may include not only these printed rules contained in the code of the society but also rules adopted between the employers of labour and the working men in that locality with the sanction of the general council?—Quite so.

And a breach of the second rule so adopted and so sanctioned by the general council would be equally offensive, I presume, as a breach of the general rules?—Yes.

With regard to the power of the council I see, on referring to the 13th rule, that the powers of the executive committee are extremely wide, because they may determine anything whereon the rules are silent?—Yes.

Consequently, the less that is defined in the rules the more power the executive committee have?—Yes; but their decisions must be in keeping with the spirit of the rules, and are printed in the reports, and the members have the right to reverse them.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Have you in your district rules any rules that relate to the health of the workmen as distinct from overtime?—Yes.

Will you give an instance?—In some instances the men stipulate for protection against the inclemency of the weather, and I have heard that they have stipulated for ventilation and light, and things of that kind, in some places, which would be conducive to health.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) I see that in your last monthly report there is a little about co-operation. Are your members favourable to the co-operative movement or unfavourable?—They are very favourable to it, and are getting more so.

Have they made any attempt to start anything of the kind?—Not as yet.

Do you think that the society as a society is favourable to it?—Yes. We have a 16-page report monthly; sometimes it is extended to 24 pages; and it is used for the purpose of disseminating useful information among the members, and there

are papers on co-operation and other things of that nature continually going the round of the society.

You have now I believe hardly any pure master carpenters, that is masters who have none but carpenters to work for them?—Almost all are builders; there are in the provincial towns more than in London men who confine themselves to carpentering and joinering alone.

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) Do you make any allowance to your men who are out owing to slackness of trade?—10s. per week for 12 weeks, and 6s. per week for 12 weeks more.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Speaking of your society, what do you consider to be the characteristic in which its excellence consists?—It is partly in fact, that it is a general organisation extending throughout the kingdom, and that it is an absolute impossibility for any one branch to become bankrupt, because at the end of the year we equalise the funds, so that the fortunate may assist the less fortunate at the end of every year. No matter how heavy the expenditure of one branch and how light that of another may have been each one at the commencement of the year sets out on its new year's journey with the same amount of funds per member. Another advantage is that it provides a man with 10s. a week when out of employment, and instead of keeping him on 10s. a week finds employment for him where he is really required and drafts him off there, paying his fare. Again it provides a great number of benefits for which we require a pretty liberal subscription. The liberal payments cause an accumulation of funds and cause the man to respect and value his society, while the advantage of blending the trade and benevolent objects together is that the one machinery performs the both duties in an admirable manner, and that makes the men value the society still more.

Is the amount of the subscription higher in your society than in most societies?—Yes, the amount is 1s. per week. In the engineers and many other societies they pay as much as we do, and the benefits are about the same, but many of the societies pay much less.

Are there any in which the payment is higher?—Yes; the Sheffield trades, as a rule, pay a very high rate of contribution; they pay liberally to support the unemployed. They prefer to a

reduction of wages, to support their unemployed labour, and they increase their contributions as their unemployed labour increases, and sometimes the contribution is increased to three or four shillings a week.

Would a skilled workman in your society object to working on the same piece or to working along with less skilled men, or do your members as a practice object to men on the ground of their want of skill?—No; sometimes it is very advantageous to have them, because there is a rough class of work that skilled workmen have an objection to, inasmuch as they feel that they are fit for something better, and at the same time the unskilled workman is learning something from his skilled partner.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) It has been said that in consequence of the action of trades unions, the present generation of workmen are not such good workmen as their fathers were, that you cannot, for instance, get such good joiners' and carpenters' work done now as you could 20 years ago. Do you think that that is true?—I do not think so, and I think that those who make the statement would be very much put about to bring facts to prove it.

You as a joiner think the work as good as ever it was?—Yes, where a fair price is paid for it; but now cheapness appears to be the order of the day, and cheap work begets bad work. . . .

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) Your society being a benefit society as well as a trade society, you do not keep your funds separate, do you?—No.

The payment of 1*s.* a week covers everything?—1*s.* per week and 3*d.* per quarter to the contingent and benevolent fund.

Do you think it desirable that the funds should be mixed together?—Yes; I see no reason why they should be separate, because we have returns from every branch of the society. On those returns are entered the monies expended, and the different purposes for which they have been expended, and these are audited and read over to a full meeting of each branch.

Is it not the case that for a benefit society to be sound it is necessary that the contributions should be based upon some calculation, on certain data of the number of persons who are likely to be receiving sick pay, and if the fund which is provided for the purpose of obtaining payment in case of sickness, or superannuation money after a certain age, is drawn upon to

pay for persons who are out of employment, is it possible that that as a benefit society can be considered sound?—Yes, I think so; it does not necessarily follow that because a man joins our society he shall have a claim for any one benefit more than another. There is no provision for setting apart a certain sum of money, nor are there any conditions in the rules which say that the men shall have sick benefit if he goes without his donation; and I do not see how we could make things any better by appropriating, say a part of our funds for sick benefit, and a part for anything else.

Might not this occur, that a person had been subscribing to your society for the purpose of obtaining support while in sickness, or a superannuation allowance, but inasmuch as your society spends nearly the whole of its funds, perhaps the whole of its funds, in supporting a strike to which he may be opposed, although he had been contributing to the society in the hope of these benefits for a great number of years, he might be unable to obtain them after all?—If it ever came to that the society would be at an end. But we should never let the case occur, because the members have monthly, quarterly, and annual reports placed in their hands, and would see the change gradually taking place, and would certainly take steps to prevent it.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Might not the same result of insolvency ensue in the case of some severe epidemic which threw a great number of the members upon the sick fund?—Yes. But the members having the state of affairs before their eyes continually would know what was coming, and they would make provision against it, and cheerfully too, for there is nothing supported with more spirit and animation than these societies.

The witness withdrew.

Adjourned to to-morrow at 12 o'clock.

Tuesday, 19th of March 1867

PRESENT:

The Right Hon. The Earl of LICHFIELD	HERMAN MERIVALE, Esq., C.B.
LORD ELCHO, M.P.	JAMES BOOTH, Esq., C.B.
The Right Hon. Sir EDMUND WALKER	THOMAS HUGHES, Esq., M.P.
HEAD, Bart., K.C.B.	FREDERIC HARRISON, Esq.
Sir DANIEL GOOCH, Bart., M.P.	

THE RIGHT HON. SIR WILLIAM ERLE IN THE CHAIR

Mr. GEORGE POTTER examined

(*Chairman.*) What is the Association that you belong to?—I belong to the London Working Men's Association.

What is your office in that?—I am President of the London Working Men's Association.

How long has it been founded?—It has been founded about 15 months.

Probably you originated the association?—I was one of the originators of it.

How many members does it consist of?—600.

Have you a printed copy of the rules that you can give us?—Yes. I will hand in a prospectus containing the principles and rules of the association (*handing in the same*).

I perceive by what I read here that the association is not devoted to any one particular trade?—No.

It is a union, I see, for general objects 'to procure the political enfranchisement and promote the social and general interests of the industrial classes'—that would be of course a very wide question. Have you anything to state or to suggest that you think would be relevant to our inquiry, which has respect to the organisation and rules of trades unions and other associations, and their effect upon the employers and upon the trading interest of the country?—I do not know what suggestions I could make. I should be very happy to give any information that you think would be serviceable to you, or that any of the members of the Commission desire to have. I belong myself to the Progressive Society of Carpenters and Joiners. I have been

a member of that society for about 13 years. That is not an amalgamated society, but one of the local societies in London belonging to the joiners. There are about 16 or 18 local societies in addition to that which have not yet amalgamated as a body, but the principles and objects of each of the societies are about the same, that is to say, they provide for burial so much at a member's death, and so much at a wife's death, and they protect their men when out of work.

Do they exist for the purposes of a benefit society?—No, purely as trade societies, but the funeral and sick benefits that attach to them have been added to some of them since their formation. Their real object is the protection of the members in their trade, providing for them when they are out of work, and when there may happen to be any struggle between them and the employers, raising a sum of money for them during that interval.

Have you in that Carpenters and Joiners Association an income by weekly or other payments?—Yes, 3*d.* a week is the payment.

Have you an accumulated fund?—What is not required for the benefits guaranteed to the members is banked, but it does not generally amount to a very great deal; the weekly payments are small, and it is purely for the purpose of meeting the contingencies that may arise from time to time.

Have you the rules of that union?—I have not a copy with me.

Is there anything peculiar according to your experience in the rules of that association? You have no doubt seen several that have been collected in publications. Do you consider that your rules are anything similar to them?—They are very similar to other rules. They provide first of all for the support of members out of work during a slackness of trade, and for the payment of them when any dispute arises, and they allow £8 at the death of a member, and £4 at the death of a member's wife. We have no particular rules in our societies but such as are very similar to those of other trade societies.

The Working Men's Association to which you belong is beyond the scope of our present inquiry?—Yes, it partakes more of the character of a trades council with an executive

which takes up the interests of trades generally whose members belong to it.

(*Sir E. W. Head.*) But it is the interests of all trades with a view to political objects particularly, is it not?—The political object is a minor object, the industrial feature in it is a greater feature than the political.

(*Chairman.*) In regard to the rules of the Carpenters and Joiners Association, you say, as I understand you, that there is nothing particular in them. Have you rules which, if I may use the general word, go to restrain competition? Do you, for instance, limit the number of apprentices that a man may take?—No, we do not. In the joiners trade I believe that, as a rule, the lads apprenticed serve seven years, and it is as good a trade as any, I believe, for apprentices. I myself served seven years at the trade, and I believe that as a rule it is very generally acted upon, but less in London than in other towns, because a system prevails here whereby an employer will take a lad with his father, the lad getting nothing perhaps for the first year, and as he gets more useful he gives in wages accordingly; but that is purely an arrangement with the masters. There is nothing in our rules to restrain the number of apprentices that any master may take.

Is there anything to compel the members of your association not to work by piece or over hours?—There is no special rule, but it is deprecated as a rule for reasons which I can mention.

I suppose they are the reasons which were stated here yesterday—that in the opinion of the unions it was desirable for the health and vigour of mind and body to limit the extent of labour to that which the human frame is ordinarily adapted for?—That is one of the points, and a very important one, but not the only point. I think that the main objection which we entertain to it is this. Suppose I went to take a contract to make 100 pair of sashes at a certain price, and that I worked rather harder than I should generally work, or ought to work, in order to get a little more money, when I had finished that job, of course the master would see that according to day price I had earned more money than those men who had worked at the day's rate, and then he would think that he had given me too much money for the work, and the tendency is generally for the master to

make a deduction in the next contract that is made. In that way it would tend to a gradual diminishing of the rate of wages, because a man who could work, perhaps, and felt inclined to work longer hours and harder than others, would be thought by the employer to be getting too much money, and he would make it a reason for reducing the contract next time, and we find that if piece work were encouraged in that way, really the price for making the articles would become nominally of small amount, and that we should have to work hard and get very little money. That is another main reason why we object to piece work. But if there could be a standing rule or a standing contract (that, for instance, no matter what money the men should get by making 100 pair of sashes, there should be no declining of the value of them) I do not think that the men would look upon the thing as they do now. Besides that there is the fear that some of the most improvident men would take the job, and go drinking some days and then work longer other days, and so the best men try to establish a fixed number of hours of work in the day, feeling that it is to the interest of our own class, and also for the interest of the employers as well.

Is it possible, in your judgment, that by giving an average rate for a medium day's work you may tend to depress the skill, and industry, and energy, and enterprise of those that are gifted with unusual powers?—No; because though we try to establish a minimum rate of wages, we are aware as practical workmen that there are various degrees of work. For instance, there is making panel doors, and there is laying floors, and there are other kinds of rough work. Now we find that a skilled artisan would not be so profitable to an employer in laying a floor or doing the rough work as he would be in making sashes or doors, and at the same time the man who could do the rough work with more advantage would not be so serviceable to the employer in making sashes, and while we apprehend and maintain that the man is worth any equivalent of wages in regard to his labour, it only devolves upon the foreman to select the men to do the kind of work which will be most serviceable to the employer,—and that is the reason why we try to maintain a minimum rate of wages, feeling sure that the employer gets out of every man a fair value for the money paid.

Is it the case in your trade that the gradations of excellence (if I may use such language) are recompensed by a higher scale of wages; that, for instance, the man who lays the floor is paid at a less rate than a man who makes the sashes?—Yes; generally the employers like to do that, but I wish the Commissioners to understand that we never demand a minimum rate of wages to non-society men. Every society man is admitted to our society in the way which I will describe, and I think it is a very important item of information to gentlemen who may not perhaps have heard it. If a man wishes to be admitted into the Progressive Society of Carpenters, of which I am a member, he must be proposed by a member of that society who has worked with him, and seconded by a member of the society who has worked with him, and these two members must testify that the man is an average workman, and capable of doing any work within his trade that he may be put to with profit to the employer. He cannot be admitted unless that is done, and therefore when any member enters the society we have testimony to the effect that they are average workmen, and capable of doing any work which may be put upon them by the foreman in the job or shop where they may work. Then we apprehend that the man is worth the standard rate of wages fixed by the trade. We do not ask a minimum rate of wages for any novices, and we do not control them in any way whatever.

Do you forbid the members from working under a given rate of wages?—We do not forbid them, but it is a contract entered into when they join our society that whether 5s. or 6s. be the standard rate they are deserving of it, and that they can earn it, and they limit themselves not to do work under that. We do not bind them, but of course if they do like to work under that standard they only cease to be members of the society.

If a member has agreed to your rules, and does not conform to them, what is the consequence?—He has to leave; we have no control over him; we merely ask him to comply with the conditions upon which he entered, and if he says 'No' he ceases to be a member.

If he has been a member twelve months, or even twelve years, if he ceases to comply his name is removed from the list

of members?—By his own wish. I do not think that there have been many cases in our society.

You have stated, I think, that there is nothing peculiar in the Joiners Association?—Nothing.

It is a trades union of the common form of trades unions?—Yes.

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) What is the fixed minimum rate of wages at which you allow your men to work in your trade?—That is generally fixed by the employers and the employed.

I understood it was fixed by your society?—No. For instance, when I joined my society the average rate of wages was 5s. per day but since then it has advanced, and would be now, I suppose, about 6s. 3d. a day.

How is that rate fixed?—It is fixed by the employers from time to time, according to the exigencies of the trade. A deputation has sometimes waited upon the employers to ask for an advance of wages, and when it is agreed upon by the master builders it is put down as a rule; then we take that as the standard rate of wages in the trade until it is altered.

Do you allow apprentices to work at less?—Yes. I was mentioning just now that the apprentice system we do not object to; but in London it is not generally acted upon. A lad has the privilege of going into a shop with his father, and works perhaps for twelve months without wages, and then he gets 4s. or 5s., according to what he can do, and he picks up his trade in that way.

What is the difference between your society and the society represented by Mr. Applegarth?—That is an amalgamated society, comprising branches in the country; mine is a local society, which has its members in one town.

It is confined to London, as I understand you?—Yes; there are about 18 or 20 local societies in London that have not been amalgamated with any society. The principles and objects are the same. But there are some additional benefits for the amalgamated carpenters, because they pay 1s. a week, and we only 3d. Ours is more purely a trade society, and less of a benefit society.

(*Mr. Booth.*) What is the number of the society to which you belong?—130. It is one of the oldest societies in London.

(*Sir E. W. Head.*) You said, I think, that it was open to a man to leave the society if he chose to work for lower wages?—He could not remain a member of the society and work against the rules.

Would no other consequence follow than his ceasing to be a member of the society, would he be exposed to any interruption or annoyance from the members of the society, which the society would, I will not say sanction, but not discountenance?—Not that I am aware of. Of course there are many charges of intimidation brought against societies, and we cannot be responsible for every individual member. There are some men perhaps who would twit a man for so leaving, but as a rule it is deprecated by the intelligent men of the trade.

If then it were done by any persons who were members of the society, it would not be sanctioned by the society, or approved of by them?—Certainly not.

You spoke of wages being fixed by agreement between the masters and the men; is there an association of the masters with whom the workmen would confer in such a case as that?—There is what is called the Master Builders Association of London which meets monthly. During the time of the London lock-out in 1859, that formed a very powerful organisation. They have their monthly meetings and their subscriptions, and arrangements and rules like a trade society, and they bind themselves to abide by the decisions arrived at at their meetings, so that we always consult the Master Builders Associations.

In fact they are organised on the one hand just as the workmen are on the other?—They are organised to try to keep down wages, while we are organised to try to keep them up. . . .

(*Mr. Harrison.*) I think you have been connected with what was called, some time ago, the short time movement, or movement for the reduction of the hours of labour. What was the object which that movement proposed to itself, and what were the grounds on which the men proceeded?—The first effort we made was in 1857. The building trades then, as a body, joined together; that is to say, the bricklayers, and masons, and plasterers, and carpenters and painters, joined in a kind of conference to try and effect a reduction in the hours of labour, in order that men might have more time to improve their

minds, and for rest and recreation. The reason we gave was, that machinery had so advanced, and that work was done now so much quicker than it was previously, that there was not a necessity for them to labour so long as previously; and we thought that arrangements could be made between the employers in the building trades and the operatives whereby we should work nine hours a day. We agitated very considerably for two years, from 1857 to 1859, in order to obtain the nine hours as the standing recognised hours of labour. But the masters thought differently, and after several interviews that we had with them, they could not see their way (so they told us) to institute a nine hours' day; and there was a very large lock-out as the ultimate result throughout the building trades in 1859.

(*Chairman.*) You did not take part in that as a member of your own trade, did you?—As a member of the joiners' trade and the builders' trade generally. I worked at the bench during all the time of the agitation.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) The society of which you are a member took an active part in that movement, I believe?—Yes, I was delegate for that society.

What were the ordinary hours of labour at that time?—10 hours a day, except on Saturday, and then we stopped at 4 o'clock.

How many hours a week was that?—58½; 10 hours for the first five days of the week, and 8½ on the Saturday.

Previous to that dispute was the practice of overtime—that is to say, of working more than those hours—common, or was it very partial in your trade?—Overtime was very much more general then; but since then I think the employers have seen that it is not so profitable as they thought it was at one time, and they find they can get a greater profit, and do their work to greater advantage, by having a larger number of men on than by having a smaller number of men working many hours. I think that they see that generally throughout the trade, and now they seem to be as desirous to prevent working overtime as the men are, and unless on some extreme occasions it is very seldom resorted to; unless, for instance, they have their shops full and cannot make arrangements for other men to go on the

work. Under those circumstances the men work for the employer till 8 o'clock at night perhaps, instead of leaving off at half-past 5.

To what extent have you known the practice of overtime carried in your trade, taking a sufficient number of cases to enable you to make a fair statement?—Speaking for myself, I have worked from 6 in the morning to 11 at night for months together. I did that when working at Baker's, in Stangates, when they were fitting up the Prince of Wales's chambers at Oxford. We used to be paid a day and a half for doing that.

Was that a single instance?—It was not a single instance, for I have done that at Myers's nearly all the summer months. When there have been large contracts on hand, we have worked till 10 or 11 o'clock, and sometimes all night.

Have you found, speaking of what you know of the men in your trade, that overtime has been injurious to them, and if so, in what way?—It is injurious in various ways to the men. I believe that if a man works long hours he generally requires more stimulants and indulges in them, and I think that, as a rule (I am speaking now of the rule, there are exceptions, of course), they do spend the money, or rather did spend the money, in extra indulgences on themselves.

Do you consider that the men who have worked overtime most commonly have been the least sober in their trade as a general rule?—I believe, as a rule they have been the least sober, and they had had far inferior houses, and their families and themselves have been kept in a very inferior social position to that of those men who have worked on an average daily, say 10 hours; for men who work long hours are generally men of the character that I have described already; they will work in long spells and then take a day's rest, and be off their work and often spend that day in drinking. The intelligent, sober, thinking, industrious men generally desire an average day, short hours; they do not desire long hours or overtime, but deprecate it as much as possible, because it is of course physically exhaustive to them and very injurious in many other ways. Shops are very unhealthy as a rule; they are better than they were, but when I worked in them, perhaps there were 60 or 70 men working in the same shop; they were most unhealthy, making

the men prematurely old, and putting many in an early grave.

Can you state positively, as a fact which has come within your knowledge, that the character of the men in the trade has been improved, that there has been more steadiness and less drunkenness, or in any other respect an improvement in the men in the trade, since the change which has been made by the short time movement, and that it is in any degree owing to that?—I believe that great improvements have taken place owing to that. When I myself first came to London we worked till half-past 5 on Saturday night. Now the men in the building trade leave off at 1 o'clock and get paid immediately and go home to dinner and clean themselves, and go out with their wives and children on Saturday afternoon. Previously they rarely got home till 8 or 9 o'clock, and had to wait about for their wages, and indulged more in going to public-houses. But I believe that great progress has been made in the temperance of that class of men and they have now more provident habits, and they seem to have a desire to spend more of their time at home, and they try to become members of building societies and other provident institutions. There has been a great step in advance in that direction, and I attribute it very mainly to the shorter hours which they are now required to labour. . . .

(*Mr. Hughes.*) With respect to piece work, do you know of any practice of the masters which the men believe makes piece work unfair towards them?—Yes, I have previously stated that the practice they adopt is that they generally make subsequent contracts very much below the figure in which they made the first.

I have heard piece work objected to on many grounds of that kind, and I should like to know if you are aware of those objections. In the first place you say that the master takes advantage of piece work to make his contract lower.—That is one of the main objections we have. Suppose for instance I were taking a hundred sashes to make at so much a foot, and that I worked hard and got a considerable amount of money, more than a man who was working day work, when that contract is to be renewed or another contract similar to it is made, the employer says, 'Too much money has been paid on that work and we must make it so much a foot less', or something of that

sort. It tends to that and that is one great objection I always had to the thing, that the employers do not act fairly towards the men. If they get a good clever man to do the work they generally try to make the price lower, so that the men get very little more money though they work harder. That is the general feeling in our trade, and in other trades as well against the adoption of piece work.

Do you know any reason why piece work is supposed by the men to have a tendency towards inducing the use of inferior material?—Yes, I think that generally men on piece work make inferior articles, they generally skip, as we say, certain kinds of work which ought to be done well and sound. Where they can do it without being found out, they evidently do skip their work, and make it inferior to what it would be if they were on day work, and if more time was given them to manufacture the article.

That is one point, but I wish to ask whether it is in your experience the tendency of piece work to make the masters give inferior material?—Yes, I believe so more extensively in their case than in that of the men. I believe that they take contracts sometimes very low, and in order to rectify the low price which they have given in they cut down both material and labour. I have known it frequently, not from practice, because I never did work at piece work, but from parties who have been working piece work in the same shop and have been close benches to me, so that I have known what has been going on.

Do you believe that the tendency to rapidly cover up work, which is stated by the men to obtain in piece work, is also likely to enable an unfair master to put in inferior work?—I do.

You have a restraint, like all other societies. You fix, in fact, the minimum rate of wages?—Yes, we do.

Have you any restraint on a member getting higher wages?—Not at all. If any one of our members is working in a shop or firm where he can do better work or more work, there is no objection to the master giving him 12s. a day, although our wages may be only 6s.

With reference to overtime, has the general feeling amongst the men on that subject changed in the last few years, do you think?—I think they still object to overtime as much now as

they previously did. There are some trades that would perhaps look more favourably upon it provided they could get a fixed scale of prices, revised from year to year; but I do not think in our trade it is looked upon with any more favour. It has always been thought objectionable for the reasons I have mentioned. The shorter hours has made it more disliked, because piece work generally tends to long hours, and there is nothing that tends to degrade and lower a man in his social position more than long hours and piece work.

I have heard the objection constantly taken that the effect of the abolition of piece work has been to make the journeyman of this generation inferior to their fathers as workmen; that you cannot, in fact, get the same class of joiners' work now as you could 29 years ago, do you believe that?—I do not. I believe that there are some joiners now who are as good workmen as ever lived, and do as good work as ever was manufactured. I believe that, though, as I have already said, men are not apprenticed so much now, the men are more advanced in intelligence, and give more time to reading works upon their trade, and practice the science of drawing, and understand geometry and its principles more than they did formerly, and I think that although many of the lads are not apprenticed they pick up a good knowledge of the trade, and become excellent workmen by being with their fathers in the shop.

Has the custom of taking apprentices been given up amongst joiners in London?—This practice is adopted in London and other large towns—that a joiner may have a lad with him in the shop; he gets the foreman to let him have his son with him. That lad goes with very little money perhaps for the first year till he becomes useful and the tools come into his hands; he gradually acquires the trade without ever being regularly bound. I believe in London, above all cities, that is generally acted upon. Sometimes there are apprentices, but it is a rare exception now.

You do not allow any man to have more than one apprentice, do you?—A master may have a hundred if he likes; we have no rules to prevent him.

With respect to the payment at 1 o'clock on Saturdays, do you believe that the objection which is urged against that—

that the men have more time to drink, and do drink more—holds good in your trade?—I believe that they drink less now than they formerly did. I believe that they are more provident and temperate than they formerly were. . . .

(*Mr. Hughes.*) Do you know of foreign joiners' work having come into the country in any large quantities lately?—I am not personally aware of the fact. I have read paragraphs in the newspapers stating that doors and mouldings of various kinds have come in, but I believe there are none to any extent.

Have you known any workmen or joiners go abroad in order to carry on their work when they can get higher wages and better conditions?—Some of the best of our workmen have gone abroad.

Do you mean to the Continent when you say 'abroad'?—America and New Zealand I was speaking of.

Have they also gone to the Continent of Europe?—Yes, to the Continent of Europe. . . .

(*Sir E. W. Head.*) You said, did you not, that the trades union assumed that the man was entitled to average wages, that all the men were on an equal footing, every man being supposed to be able to do a day's work?—Yes.

But is it not the fact that there is an infinite difference between the skill and strength of one man, and the skill and strength of another in body as in mind; and that although the union may assume that all men are exactly equal in skill and power to work, that is not so in fact?—That generally rests with the decision of a foreman.

It is a fact that all persons are not equal?—Of course all are not equally strong or intelligent, but in a shop where there are different kinds of work, the foreman sees at once which job to give a particular man to do. That same man would not be able perhaps to do so profitably work of another kind.

That is to say, the workmen are classified?—Yes, and the strong workman might not be able to do so much as the weak workman who, however, can do more artistic work perhaps, and we think that both are deserving of the payment of wages which are supposed to be the average throughout the trade.

Although they may not be equally skilful?—Not on the same kind of work. The selection of work is generally made by the

foreman, and in a large shop it is done profitably to the employer by all hands.

Is not the work of a more skilled workman worth more than the work of a less skilled workman, or ought it not to be?—No, because they cannot all have one job. If I was set to lay a floor when I could make sashes just as well, I should desire to make the sashes, and I should consider that I ought not to be always kept on the floor, because it would not be fair to keep one man on one thing and another on another. I could do (we will suppose) any kind of work that the builder had to do, then if they set me to do an inferior job, they ought not on that account to pay me less.

How is it in other occupations of life? Are persons who do inferior work paid the same as those who do superior work?—There is no question as to that, but that is one of the advantages of our combination. . . .

(*Lord Elcho.*) You have no absolute rule prohibiting piece work as I understand you?—We have not.

But you say you deprecate it?—Yes.

And remonstrate against it?—We try as much as we can to prevent its being brought into operation, because of its evil effects.

How do you endeavour to obviate those evil effects when you cannot prevent the thing itself? You reason, you say, with men who are inclined to work piece work and overtime, but supposing that your reasoning is not effective, what happens?—They continue on piece work.

They are not turned out of the society?—No, we seldom turn a man out of the society. When a man does not conform to the rules of the society he ceases to be a member of it. I do not know a case of a man being turned out. He has probably fallen in arrears, or in some other way has ceased to be a member of the society.

What percentage of the men are in the habit in your society of working overtime and piece work?—I think that as a rule it is very seldom that any of them work overtime now, except on a special job that requires to be finished. It has now become very rare in the building trade; it is only when the shop is full and no more hands can be taken on that the employer resorts to it,

because I believe they have seen the evil effects of it as much as the men themselves.

Is it recently that this change has come into operation?—During the last three or four years. . . .

Do the members of your society take any oath on becoming members of your society?—No. An applicant is proposed by one member and seconded by another, and then he retires, and his abilities as a workman are discussed before the meeting, and the question is put from the chair, and if it is carried the man is admitted, and the chairman informs him that he is admitted a member of the society in accordance with the rules which previously he has read and assented to.

And does he take no oath afterwards?—No.

In any society that you have been connected with is there no oath taken?—I know of none.

You know of none personally?—Never in my life have I known it. . . .

In the event of a strike, have you known any measures taken to watch men and prevent their taking work?—The means which we adopt is, of course, placing what we call pickets on the job where the men have struck. We do not object to that, because we consider it to be a legitimate piece of business. The pickets are all instructed not to coerce or intimidate any man. They are pickets selected from the work where the strike is to go and sit there, and inform any man applying for a job that the men have had a dispute with their employers and are now out, and to suggest to them the advisability of refraining.

That is to say your society which is on strike appoints men to keep guard as it were on the work?—You will understand that it is not generally a society that is on strike, it is generally a firm or job, and it will only affect those on the job. Our society therefore does not control the strike, but the strike is controlled and conducted by the men who have ceased to work forming themselves into a committee and carrying on the business. The society are all outside of that, and the society can only interfere in reference to that strike through its own individual members. If we had men that were working on that job where a dispute had occurred we should be obliged to support our workmen from our society, but we should have nothing to do with the other

men; they might belong to other societies over which we have no control. The men who strike form a committee, and appoint some of their fellow-men who have struck to stand by turns at the gate or doorway and just peaceably inform members of the trade that there is a dispute, and that it is advisable for them to abstain from applying for work, but if they go and apply for work of course there is no prevention.

Supposing that a man or men belonging to societies of which the workmen that are on strike are not members, were to apply and went in to work, and these pickets saw that, would they report them to their society?—We do not believe any members of a society would apply; we could not assume that it would be done.

You fancy that the organisation of societies is such that if the members belonging to one society will not work for a particular firm, none of the members belonging to another society would work for that firm?—I do not believe so much in the society as in the moral sense of justice of the members.

You think that the men would stand by each other?—Yes.

Believing those that are on strike to be in the right?—Yes. . . .

(*Mr. Merivale.*) You say that in your opinion the joiners of the present day are as efficient and as skilful, if not more so, as those before them. Piece work being discouraged, what inducement has one man to become more efficient and skilful than another?—The same inducement that he always has had, that he should receive the highest amount of wages he can for his skill.

Day wages, you mean?—Yes.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) You, therefore, do not believe in the general accusation of idleness and dawdling over work on the part of workmen which prevails in London?—I have no doubt some men dawdle, but men as a rule if they see a man not doing his work compel him to do it, because they generally work in pairs, and if your mate is slacking you keep him up to his work. There is no encouragement given by the society to that dawdling. . . .

The witness withdrew.

Mr. WILLIAM ALLAN examined

(*Chairman.*) You are secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, are you not?—Yes.

When did that society begin?—It was established on the 1st of January 1851. But perhaps it might be as well for me to explain that it was established out of a number of societies that previously existed.

Out of several societies which you call branch societies?—No, independent societies.

Independent societies joined this in 1851?—Yes.

How many members does it comprise at present?—33,600.

And how many branches?—308 branches.

Is the number of members increasing?—It increases at the rate of between 2,000 and 3,000 per year.

Have you got the increase for 1865 and 1866; were 3,000 members added in 1865 and 3,300 in 1866?—Yes.

Are those individual members, or were they unions that came in?—They were new members.

Have you established any new branches this year?—Yes; a few this year, and a number last year.

And have you branches in England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, the colonies, and the United States, and one in France?—Yes. For the information of the Commissioners I should say that in England and Wales there are 238 branches, numbering 27,856 members; in Scotland there are 33 branches, and 3,218 members; in Ireland 11 branches, with 1,371 members. In the British colonies there are 14, that includes Australia, Canada, Malta, New Zealand, and Queensland, and those 14 branches contain 626 members. The United States have 11 branches with 498 members. In France we have only one branch, which is in Croix, in the north of France, and numbers 30 members. Altogether there are 308 branches, with 33,599 members.

Have you rules for the amalgamated society?—Yes. Here is a copy of the present rules, and here is a copy of our original rules when we started in 1851 (*handing in the same*).

Are there separate rules for the different branches?—No; one code of rules governs the whole of the members.

Is there anything peculiar in the constitution of the 11 branches in the United States?—Nothing whatever; they conform to our rules.

How are they governed; are all governed in the same way?—All alike.

A committee of delegates at the branch?—Yes; so many committee-men in proportion to the number of members in each branch.

Do you know whether there are any unions or amalgamated unions in America, and do they prevail to any extent there?—I believe that in the iron trades there are some very extensive associations there.

Have they any of engineers?—Yes.

What is the reason then of their becoming branches of a foreign union?—So far as our members are concerned, I think all the branches are principally composed of Englishmen who have left England and gone out to the United States and established branches in the different places to which they went; they have not been established by what we would call Americans proper, but by our own countrymen.

They were members of a society here, as I understand you?—Yes, of our association principally.

And they have continued members of the London Society; they have gone to America and have established branches in America, and are in a manner affiliated to their former society?—Yes, exactly so.

Is it the same in the case of France?—Just the same.

What caused that one particular branch to establish itself in France?—It is principally composed of Englishmen; in fact, I may state that the whole of the members there are Englishmen; that is to say, they were employed in a large manufactory there, and they made application for a branch, and we granted it.

How are they admitted in London to membership?—A candidate is proposed by two of the members of the society, and then he stands over for a fortnight or a month, in order that we may ascertain his abilities as a workman and his moral character; and at the end of the fortnight or month, as the case may be, he is admitted a member or rejected.

Is there the same process in admission to the branches which

exists in the foreign countries; in the United States for instance?—Yes, throughout the society; no one can be admitted contrary to the rules; or if any are, they stand a very good chance of being excluded as soon as it is known.

How are your funds obtained?—By a subscription of 1s. per week from each member.

Will you state about what your fund is at present?—In round numbers at the present time it is £140,000.

Is that in the funds?—Not in the funds,—in different banks. That is to say, the accumulated fund is about £140,000.

And what is about your present annual income? £86,885, is it not?—Yes; that would be for 1865. Our 1866 report is not yet out.

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) You say that the subscription is 1s. a week, and the number of members 33,000; Where does the rest of the money come from?—From admissions. There is a certain amount that every candidate has to pay, not less than 15s. as an entrance fee, and, according to age, it may amount to £3 10s. You will see, therefore, that we derive a large amount of revenue in the way of admissions into the society, the entrance fees being, as I have said, according to age.

(*Chairman.*) What was your expenditure in 1865?—The expenditure in that year was £49,172.

What were the heads under which that £49,000 was distributed?—To members out of employment there was £14,076; to sick members, £13,785 14s. 9d.; and to superannuated members (that is to say, members who were too old to gain the ordinary rate of wages at the trade—we allow such from 7s. to 9s. per week each) £5,184 17s 4d. Then, in funerals on members' deaths or their wives' deaths we paid £4,887.

Is any allowance to widows included in that last amount?—At the death of a member we pay the widow £12, and that is included in the amount. All expenses, so far as the funeral is concerned, are included. Then we paid £1,800 in cases of accident, that is, where members got disabled from following their employment in consequence of some accident occurring to them, for instance, under the loss of an arm or anything of that kind.

(*Sir D. Gooch.*) Ceasing to be able to follow the trade?—Yes; we had 18 claimants and they received £100 each.

(*Lord Elcho.*) Is that all the privilege they can derive?—No, they have afterwards the privilege of paying 6*d.* a week and deriving sick benefit, and also the funeral money at death, and, generally speaking, five out of every six, I should say, retain their position in the society by the payment of 6*d.* per week. Then we have a benevolent fund, through which we have paid away £820; that is a fund that is in addition to the ordinary subscription of 1*s.* a week; it is to relieve cases of extraordinary distress that may exist in consequence of men being long out of employment or in sickness.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) That does not come out of the 1*s.* per week?—No, that does not come out of the 1*s.* per week.

(*Lord Elcho.*) Is that voluntary?—No, it is compulsory; we find that voluntary subscriptions do not come in so well as compulsory ones.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) Is that a levy?—It is a levy, but is agreed to by a majority of votes; that is to say, it is put to the members whether they will agree to it or not.

(*Lord Elcho.*) Is it put to them annually?—No; only when the fund gets so low that we require it to be increased.

(*Mr. Booth.*) Is that levied on all the branches?—On every member throughout the society, no matter where they are.

Does one levy a year suffice?—Yes; but during the cotton famine we found that two levies were necessary in order to meet the distress in Lancashire and other districts. Then to the branch officers during 1865 we paid £4,337; that is to say, to the staff throughout the whole of the 300 and odd branches. . . .

(*Chairman.*) What has been the effect of the Union upon wages and hours, in your opinion?—To lower the hours of labour and to maintain a proper rate, or what we conceive to be a proper rate, of wages.

Are you of opinion that there has been an increase of wages by reason of the action of the Union that would not have occurred had the Union not existed?—Decidedly so.

And similarly, with regard to the lowering of the number of hours?—Decidedly so.

(*Sir D. Gooch.*) What are the Union hours now?—It depends on the locality. In London, for instance, it is 58½ hours per week. In Manchester and that district it is 57½ hours per week;

and in some parts about the north of England and some parts of Scotland it is 60 hours per week.

(*Chairman.*) Is there any prohibition as to men working over hours?—No, we have no rule to prevent any member from working over hours.

But, adopting a phrase which was used just now, do you either deprecate it or discountenance it?—No, we would prefer that it was not done, but still we make no decided objection to it.

Have you any objection to piece work?—Yes, we have a very decided objection to it, and endeavour to do away with it where we have the opportunity.

In what way do you make your objection known to the workman who is inclined to take piece work?—That is made known to him through the committee of management of his branch, which I have already referred to.

Does it lie only in words to the effect that the society object to piece work, or is the man fined; is there anything more than persuasion?—We have resorted to other steps. For instance, if a member will persist in doing so contrary to the wish of his fellow members, we sometimes expel him from the society. . . .

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) What do you consider is the reason of the fact, that you have had no strike of any consequence since 1852?—The Executive Council, and the members, generally speaking, are averse to strikes. They think that matters ought to be settled in a different way than coming to strikes or locks-out.

I think you said that the formation of your society had led to an increase of wages, and a shortening of the hours of labour, since it has been established, and that has been done it appears without any important strike; I want to know, therefore, how that has been brought about?—By sending in memorials to the different employers, who conceded certain points in question.

What steps do you take upon those occasions; do you send a deputation to the masters?—We send a deputation from the shop, consisting of a number of workmen, say three, of those who may be employed in the particular factory in which we want to remedy any grievance; we recommend that three of their own workmen should meet the employers and discuss the question with them.

Have you ever found that there has been any difficulty raised on the part of the employers to receiving such a deputation?—Sometimes a little difficulty, but as a rule the employers are prepared to meet a deputation from their own workmen.

Under the present state of the law, your funds in the hands of your treasurers have been insecure, have they not, since the recent decision?—That decision has alarmed some, but it has not alarmed me much; I think we have just as much security now as we had before, because all of the money that we have deposited in the Post Office Savings Bank is invested in the name of the society and in the names of five trustees acting on behalf of the society.

I am referring to money not invested, but that may from time to time be in the hands of the treasurer?—We should be in an awkward position certainly with regard to that.

If your rules were to be recognised by law, would you have any objection to depositing the accounts of your society annually with the Registrar of Friendly Societies, in the manner in which all the accounts of all friendly societies are deposited?—Certainly not; for when our yearly reports come out we endeavour to make them as public as possible, in order that they may act as advertisements for non-society men to join; and we send copies of them to all the daily papers, and to the principal weeklies, and take other steps in order to make them as public as we can. . . .

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) Would you explain to us your objections to piece work?—To be candid with you (and that is the best way of dealing with the question), we believe that it has a tendency to injure the trade; that is to say, that by the introduction of piece work, and everyone being allowed to use his own discretion in the matter, ultimately our wages would be brought down to something like the sweating system amongst the tailors; and so we endeavour to destroy the system wherever we possibly can.

(*Sir D. Gooch.*) Have you found that piece work does reduce wages?—Yes, certainly.

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) Have you any other objection to piece work beyond that?—We have other objections; we believe that it is not altogether a proper system, but that the work in a great

measure suffers, that it is not done in so finished and good a style as if it were done by day work. Then, too, the wages of piece work are generally settled by an expert workman; that is, the employers generally give a piece of new machinery or whatever they want doing into the hands of an expert workman, so that if he gets what may be considered a fair wage, those who are not such good hands come down to almost a starvation price.

(*Sir D. Gooch.*) That is not the practice, is it; a man is never kept on piece work earning less than the ordinary rate, is he?—Yes; there have been instances in which a workman has been obliged to go with less than his ordinary day wages would be.

Is it common?—I have known many instances of such being the case; and at the Royal Arsenal and some other Government works it has occurred.

(*Mr. Merivale.*) Is the rate of wages really and permanently lower where piece work prevails than the rate of wages where piece work does not prevail?—No; in Manchester the wages are higher than in any other part of the district, and there piece work exists to a very considerable extent, though not so much as formerly.

Is there any complaint of the work being inferior in places where piece work prevails?—Yes; as a general rule I think it is inferior.

(*Mr. Booth.*) I think you stated that the wages in Manchester were considerably higher than the wages in Bolton; would it be in the ordinary course of the council of your society to aid or countenance the workmen in Bolton in getting the same rate as those at Manchester?—We should be only too happy if we could help them in doing so.

My question was directed to this, whether it would be in the course and part of the duty of your society to aid or to countenance the workmen of Bolton in raising their wages to the same level as that of those in Manchester?—We would do all that we possibly could; the society would countenance them in getting a higher rate of wages, but then we might after all not allow them to proceed so far as to ask for so much as we are receiving in Manchester. But the Society would no doubt fully consider the circumstances of each case. . . .

(*Mr. Hughes.*) It is very difficult for a strike to happen in your society, I believe. What measures have men to take, for example, before they can strike in your society?—They have to represent their grievances to the committee of their branch. In a town where there is more than one branch there is what is called a district committee, composed of seven members from the different branches, or more in proportion to the number of branches in the district; and instead of the branch committee dealing with the question, the district committee deals with it, because there is a larger representation. For instance, here in London we have a district committee composed of 24 members because we have 24 branches in the district, and when any dispute arises in the district the whole of the 24 branches are represented, thereby bringing about a proper understanding in relation to the question at issue, and affording a better opportunity for arriving at a satisfactory conclusion.

But supposing that the men who wished to go out had got the consent of their branch in their own town, what else would they have to do?—Then they would require to get the consent of the district committee, and the approval of the executive council.

Therefore unless approved of in the first place by the branches of their own town, and in the second place by the central executive council, no members of your trade can strike?—No, or at least they ought not to strike.

That is to say, they would not be supported if they did?—I would not take upon myself exactly to say that, because a great deal would depend upon the nature of the case. If some employer, for instance, went and said to his workmen ‘Your wages after tomorrow night would be reduced 3s. a week’, in all probability the men would leave there and then; in that case we would consider them entitled to the benefits of the society.

But as the ordinary rule, they would require to get first the consent of their own branch and then that of the executive council?—Yes, where there was time.

And upon the consent of the executive council being given, the men would go out, and get their allowance?—Yes.

You said that the whole of the officers in the society stood the society in the figure of something over £4,000?—Yes.

A good deal has been said about the salaries of these officers; what is the average salary of a branch secretary of your society?—The highest salary that is paid to a branch secretary is £10 4s. a year, and he must have 300 members before he can get that amount, and it comes down to as low as 25s.

Is a branch secretary generally a man working in the workshop too?—Yes.

Generally a man employed as a mechanic?—Yes.

What sum do you pay to the members of the different branch councils for each attendance; you pay them something for attendances I suppose?—Yes, a member of the branch committee is allowed 6d. a night for attendance.

Also, I think, whenever you call a delegate meeting you make some allowances. You pay the expenses of the men, do not you?—Supposing one of our members to be delegated from London to any part of the country, we pay him his railway fare, second class, there and back; we pay him the wages that he may be earning in London, and in addition to that we pay him 7s. a day for his expenses.

Beyond those payments which you have mentioned are there any paid officers or members of your society?—There are no paid officers beyond the committees, the executive council, the general secretary and assistants, the secretaries of the branches, and the treasurers of the branches.

The treasurers are paid officers, are they?—Yes, they are paid in proportion to the amount they advance from one meeting night to another, or fortnightly.

(*Earl of Lichfield.*) Do you take any security from your treasurers?—Yes; it is optional with the branch to get the treasurer to sign a bond or not—if they have the utmost confidence in him they do not get it.

You do not, as a rule, require it?—No; at the next meeting I will produce a bond of that kind that we use.

(*Chairman.*) Do you have sureties in that case?—No, simply the treasurer himself.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) You have stated all the paid persons connected with the society?—Yes.

The auditors are from outside, I suppose?—The auditors are paid.

They are not members of the society, are they?—Yes.

What do the executive council get?—They get 1s. 6d. a night for their attendance, and if they reside more than two miles from the general office they are allowed 1s. for their railway or other fare. Then if the council has a day meeting they are paid their wages, and those that live within three miles get 5s. 6d. and those who live beyond the three miles get 7s., besides their 1s. for their fare. . . .

Tuesday, 26th March 1867

PRESENT:

In addition to those listed on p. 92.

JOHN ARTHUR ROEBUCK, Esq., M.P.

WILLIAM MATHEWS, Esq.

Mr. WILLIAM ALLAN further examined

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Within the last few years, I think you have already told us, the amount which has been expended in benefit to members has been a very great proportion more than the amount which has been expended in trade disputes?—Decidedly.

Is it not the fact that there is a great distinction between these trades unions which exist very largely and combine with their purposes benefits and those of which the subscription is small and which are mainly engaged in maintaining trade privileges?—A great distinction.

And you consider that yours is one of the former class?—Yes.

And that it is in fact an insurance society in a very prominent degree?—Yes.

Have you found, as a matter of experience, that the existing state of the law presses more hardly upon a society of your class than upon a society of the other class?—From the late decision given in the Court of Queen's Bench we do find now that we are placed in a very different position from what we expected we occupied.

Is it the case that you, being a benefit society, and having very large funds for insurance purposes, have had a doubt cast upon the security of your property by the present state of the law, whereas many trades unions which exist mainly to interfere in trade disputes, which are strike societies in point of fact in

another sense of the term, and which have no reserve funds to any great extent, are hardly affected at all?—Yes.

Do you think that the present state of the law, whilst it tolerates all classes of unions, presses upon those unions which are benefit societies for unexceptionable purposes, and does not very seriously interfere with the existence of societies which exist for strike purposes?—Yes. As I have said, the late decision places us altogether in a very awkward position, but I believe that that decision is quite contrary to law.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Does not that decision affect you because you are rich, because you have money, and is it not the case that it does not affect the others because they are poor?—It will affect more or less all societies, whether rich or poor.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) Does it not act as a check upon small societies which have existed chiefly as strike societies to prevent them from developing gradually into benefit societies?—I do not think that the late decision could have had any effect of that kind as yet, because it has been so recent, and societies which felt disposed to couple with their other purposes benefit objects would have done so.

But in future, supposing the law is not altered, do you suppose any such consequence would follow?—I do not know that. For the information of the Commissioners I may state that when the recent decision became known we appointed a deputation, of which I formed one, to wait on Mr. Walpole to request him to put the case before the law officers of the Crown, in order to see in what position we really stood; however, he declined to do so, and we believe that we could not have affected the question at all by taking it up, and expending a vast amount upon law proceedings, but that the better plan would be to wait patiently the result of this Commission and then have proper legislation on the subject.

Have you found by experience that the advance in wealth and strength of your society has tended to make strikes in the trade more frequent or the reverse?—Quite the reverse?

Have you found, for instance, taking the last 15 years, that there have been more trade disputes and more cases of strike and lock-out than there had been in previous periods of 15 years, or fewer?—Fewer.

Has the executive or central council or governing body of the society, in your opinion, done anything to prevent disputes from breaking into an actual strike?—The executive council does all it possibly can to prevent any strike, and where they have time or opportunity, generally, as I stated here the other day, they cause a deputation of the workmen to wait on their employers to represent their grievances, and then the council gives advice afterwards. We endeavour at all times to prevent strikes. It is the very last thing that we would think of encouraging.

Do you find that the possession of very large funds, and the fact that they belong to a very powerful organisation, such as your society is, tends generally to make the members of your society disposed to enter into such a dispute, or the contrary? I am not asking now with regard to the council but the members?—I should say that the members generally are decidedly opposed to strikes, and that the fact of our having a large accumulated fund tends to encourage that feeling amongst them. They wish to conserve what they have got, as I have heard it put here, the man who has not got a shilling in his pocket has not much to be afraid of, but with a large fund such as we possess, we are led to be exceedingly careful not to expend it wastefully, and we believe that all strikes are a complete waste of money, not only in relation to the workmen but also to the employers.

Have you found by experience that your society has done anything to promote the same feeling or the same practice in other trade societies?—Many of the societies (the Amalgamated Carpenters and others I could mention) have taken in fact our constitution and our mode of arrangement as their guide.

Has your society in recent times ever interfered in trade questions with a view of bringing about a settlement?—Yes.

Has it ever interfered to put a stop to, or dissuade, or discountenance, a threatened strike or an actual strike?—Decidedly; we have recommended that no strike should take place, at least in 20 cases in as many months.

In your own trade or in other trades do you mean?—In our own trade. The question in dispute has generally arisen from the fact of the high rate of provisions and other necessities,

and our members have consequently wished to have an advance of wages.

In your trade, within the last 10 or 12 years, have wages fluctuated much, or have they been more or less stationary?—They have fluctuated little or nothing till within the last 12 months, when there has been an upward tendency. It must be borne in mind that I now speak of London and Manchester. Away in the north of England and in Scotland the wages have improved vastly within these last few years—year after year almost; but that has arisen from the fact of the large amount of shipbuilding going on at Newcastle and different parts round there as well as on the Clyde.

How often within the last 10 years has your society supported or maintained a strike directly for the purpose of raising wages?—I think there have been only some three or four; two at Blackburn and one at Preston, where the strike has been directly for wages, and there has been one at Keighley, but certainly not more than six of that description.

And for a reduction of hours, how many strikes have there been?—There has not been any strike of any importance for that object, with the exception of one at Glasgow, and that did not originate with our society. . . .

(*Mr. Harrison.*) As a practical question do you find that efficient workmen of skill and inventive powers have been able to raise themselves in your trade to the position of foremen or employers and so forth?—Decidedly so.

Is it the case then that leading men in the union have not been, in your judgment, kept back by the agency of the society?—The leading men in the union are not very likely to be the men that will be promoted by the employers, but I may state that the bulk of the foremen, managers, and superintendents at one time and another have been members of our association, and, in fact, there are numbers who hold very good positions now, who have been the founders of the institution.

What are the principal complaints that the executive council have had to deal with as coming from members of the society, —have they been complaints of conduct on the part of employers, or foremen, or overseers?—Complaints I think generally arise when changes take place in different factories, when a new

superintendent or manager is introduced; on the principle that new brooms sweep clean they begin to alter the regulations and to discharge men and a great deal of ill-feeling is created in consequence of that. For instance, the gentleman who succeeded Sir Daniel Gooch as superintendent of the Great Western Railway has endeavoured to reduce the rate of wages, and we have endeavoured to prevent his doing it. His line of argument, I suppose, is that there is not a dividend paid to the shareholders. Our mode of arguing the question is that it is not a matter of any importance to us whether there is a dividend or not, that if you enter into a bad contract it is your business, not ours.

Have you ever found that those who have taken a prominent part in trade disputes have met with any difficulty in obtaining work?—In some instances I have known cases of that kind, where they could not obtain employment, and have been obliged to go into some other line of business.

And have you found in practice that in any works the society men are refused employment?—Yes, at some places they object to employ them if they know that they are society men.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Do you know that at this very time the great firm of John Brown & Co., at Sheffield, have issued an advertisement that no union man will be employed?—I am not aware that a document of that description has been issued, but I am aware that we pay no attention to it.

Do you know that that factory is full of men now?—I have no doubt it is; am I to understand that that question is meant to convey that Mr. Brown's establishment is at work without any society men?

Yes.—Then I say I very much doubt it.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) Do you know of any lists having been published by masters, or by men, with a view of marking men?—Yes.

Have you ever seen such lists?—I have one or two with me.

Can you produce them?—Yes; I now hold in my hand a list which, in 1855, was published by the firm of Sharp, Stewart & Co., of Manchester, at the Atlas Works; we had a dispute there in consequence of the number of boys employed. Our members, and in fact the non-society men as well, left the employment. Directly after they left the employment, Messrs. Sharp,

Stewart & Co. published this list, and sent it to the employers, announcing to them that these men had struck work. Now it is quite clear that the object was to prevent those men from getting employment; then here is an amended list (*producing it*) containing a few more names; they were not exactly satisfied with the first list, but they got hold of some other names, and they published a second edition of the list, as you might call it. Then our members who were employed in that shop at the time thought that what was good for the goose would not be at all bad for the gander, and they published a list of those that went in.

In your experience have those sorts of lists been common?—They are not common, but it is unusual to publish them; for instance, in the great dispute of 1852 we did not publish any lists, and we only published this list from the fact that the employers had shown us the example.

(*Mr. Mathews.*) It was a sort of retaliation?—Yes.

You were speaking about the admission of boys into shops, and I think you stated that the union generally set their face against the admission of boys beyond a certain number?—Yes.

In point of fact if the masters encouraged the admission of boys beyond the number dictated by the men, the result would be that the men would withdraw from that particular shop?—It might end in that.

You set your face against competition in labour by the free admission of boys?—We endeavour to prevent an overplus of labour in our market by the admission of boys.

So that while keen competition is brought to bear on the operation of masters in every department of trade, the workmen contrive by this means to shut out the competition of labour?—No, I think it generally regulates itself.

But would not the effect of the unions be to interfere with that self-regulation?—Decidedly so; we do interfere as regards the society men. . . .

(*Sir D. Gooch.*) Supposing that English employers were competing with foreign locomotive builders, what chance have English houses to compete with foreign houses if the manufacturer has no power in deciding the mode of carrying on his business. If he can by the employment of boys get his work

done cheaper why should he not, and what interest is it to your society of engineers to shut out boys from the works, in order that foreign competition may not come in by reason of a regulation of that kind?—I should say that it is not to their interest to let any of the orders go away if they can possibly avoid it. But it must first be shown that the orders have gone away in consequence of their not being able to execute the works here as cheap. Take Belgium, for instance, in the iron trade, there they were reducing the wages 10 per cent. in order to compete with the English, while at the same time the English were reducing theirs 10 per cent. in order to compete with the Belgians.

Take the French locomotives, the engine builders here could not build them at the price at which they were coming over to us from France?—I have heard of some engines that have come to the Eastern Counties Railway; but really so many things have been stated about them, that I doubt the cheapness.

Supposing I tell you as a fact that they are much cheaper, is it not contrary to the interest of your own trade that such a state of things should be encouraged?—In answer to that, I should say, that if you propose to reduce the wages of the engineers in this country to the same level as they are at in France, in order that you may make the engines in this country, it is better in my opinion, to maintain the rate of wages, if we possibly can, by going there and keeping wages up; because if the work is not done here it must be done there, and we are sending our men over there every day.

Do you mean that you send them over there to try and reduce the rate of wages?—No, our men get better wages over there.

Can you account for that?—I think that those very engines that have been supposed to be manufactured in France, have really been manufactured in Yorkshire and sent over to France in the manufactured state, if you go into the history of them.

The materials used may be sent over, but not the engines?—I think you must know exceedingly well from the position which you have held, as a locomotive superintendent, that such is the fact, that a large portion of these very engines that went to the Eastern Counties Railway have been manufactured in Yorkshire.

Would it not be more correct to say, not that the engines were manufactured in Yorkshire, but that the specifications which the Eastern Counties Company sent out required certain parts of those engines to be made of certain materials so that whoever made those engines must go to Yorkshire for those materials, that the tires and the boiler-plates for instance, were to be of a certain character. Then they were able to import those raw materials from this country, and nevertheless, to deliver the engines in their finished state to the Eastern Counties Company at a cheaper rate than that at which builders in this country could undertake the work?—I have been informed, (I do not vouch for the correctness of it), that not only were the tires completed, but that the cranks and wheels were completed, and the axles as well in this country, and those form a very important part of a locomotive; and if they insist on coming to England for the material, even according to the Eastern Counties' view of the question, it only proves this, that we have a very superior material in this country to that which they have got there. So far as the Eastern Counties Company are concerned, the saving to them is scarcely worth taking into consideration; for you must know that Mr. Robert Sinclair was for many years out in France, and I can very well understand an order going out there. But I think you must be aware that lately the Eastern Counties Company had tenders for a large number of engines, and that one-half of them have gone to Manchester, and the other half to Glasgow. Now if the Eastern Counties were so well supplied in the first instance from France, why in the name of goodness are they coming back to England?

(*Chairman.*) When you say that tenders have been sent, you mean accepted, I presume?—Yes; that is to say, after they had been supplied so exceedingly cheap from France, and notwithstanding that fact, the English manufacturers have come in and taken this large order given out some time ago, as I am credibly informed, for 40 engines, 20 going to Manchester and 20 to Glasgow.

(*Sir D. Gooch.*) It might be, might it not, that those are cases of competition with French houses, and that they are making those engines now without a profit, all that they get by those engines are going to the workmen, and the workmen not assist-

ing the masters in getting a fair profit? If that is so, that will not last long?—I can scarcely understand an employer manufacturing 20 engines for less than a remunerative price. But the fact is, that at that very price the wages are higher now than ever they were before at Byres and Peacock's, who are making some of those engines.

It may be an advantage, I suppose, and is an advantage in point of fact for one of these large establishments to be kept going, even without a shilling profit; the manufacturer would rather keep his works going than let them stand?—That is not a rule, I think, with Manchester men or Scotchmen.

Do you not think that work has been done at Manchester now in the engineering branch without any profit?—I can scarcely conceive of such a contract as that taken being done without profit. . . .

(*Lord Elcho.*) Your society has complete cognisance of the rates of wages in different parts of England and Scotland, has it not?—Complete.

Is your recommendation for an increase of wages in any case founded upon those rates?—It depends upon the knowledge of facts we have in the district. For instance, if Newcastle men expect to have 32*s.* a week, equal to what is paid in Manchester, we say it is quite absurd to suppose that you will get a jump from 26*s.* or 28*s.* to 32*s.* We would practically reason with them and show them the evil result that would follow.

You have said that when an employer proposed to reduce wages you generally resisted that on the principle that having got what you desired to get you would endeavour to retain it?—Certainly.

Do you on giving advice on these matters take into account questions of competition between different parts of the United Kingdom or questions of foreign competition, and how far it is possible for employers to compete with each other if certain wages are given?—We know nothing in fact of the circumstances of the employer's competition, and therefore we are not in a position to deal with it, but as a rule I would say that if one employer runs into competition with another, we would decidedly object to allow the employer who has reduced the price of the article to reduce our wages to meet that.

But where the employers give you as a reason for a reduction in the price of the article that the demand is diminished, do you procure any information for your society which would enable you to judge whether such a statement is founded on fact, and whether with the diminished demand for the article the masters' wish to lower wages is unreasonable?—We generally make inquiry, and we have, as a rule, means of ascertaining pretty accurately the condition of things before we give advice. I would not like exactly to explain in detail to the Commissioners by what mode we get that information, because it would injure some person or other, but we generally get all this information from officials in connexion with the establishments.

If you have reason to believe in any one case that owing to the falling off in the demand there ought to be a diminution in the rate of wages, do you recommend that a reduction should be effected or do you still adhere to that principle of keeping what you have got?—We have submitted to a reduction of wages, and are doing so now in some parts of England. Take the north of England, it will be known to most here that in the engineering trade at the present time a reduction has taken place in the rate of wages. . . .

(*Lord Elcho.*) In the earlier part of your evidence today, you said I think that your society discouraged strikes as much as possible, believing them to be a waste of money, and to be hurtful. Is that your opinion generally with reference to strikes?—Yes.

To what description of strikes do you apply that remark?—To all description of strikes where disputes arise between the employers and the workmen, where the men either leave work or are locked out. As a general rule I think they are hurtful.

Your experience, then, is that they have not benefited the men?—They have in some instances.

As a rule not?—As a rule things have been much the same at the finish of the strike as they were before it commenced.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) With all the misery of the strike meanwhile?—Yes. . . .

(*Mr. Booth.*) You stated that you objected to strikes; do not you think that looking at the large funds of your society a

recommendation made by you is as powerful in its influence as a strike in a smaller society?—I think not; we endeavour to arrange matters; in many cases I go myself and talk the matter over with the parties.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) What you are now asked is, whether a hint from your society is not as good as a blow from another?—No, that would be a kind of intimidation.

(*Sir E. W. Head.*) You approve of the object the strike has, that of raising wages?—Yes.

But it should be done in the cheapest way, you think?—Cheap or dear, I think that it is an evil under any circumstances.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) But do you believe that the engineers' wages would have been what they are without the fear of strikes and without the strike of 1852?—I believe that that strike has done us a great amount of good; that it was the means of getting a great number of persons to join the society who had for years stood aloof from it.

(*Mr. Merivale.*) Do you believe that one great society, however great it may be, has kept up wages for 13 years?—I think the fact is that employers, generally speaking, do not wish to have disputes of that kind, and so things go on.

(*Sir D. Gooch.*) Has not that arisen from the fact that for the last 13 years there has been a prosperous state of things in the great establishments throughout this country, and that the time for a contrary state of things has now come?—No, I think not; because since the bad state of trade set in in the engineering departments of London they have raised the wages. . . .

(*Lord Elcho.*) Did your society take any part in an international trades union meeting which was held at Geneva?—No.

Are you aware there was such an international meeting?—Perfectly. We were requested to go, but our society took no part in the meeting, they believed that the best thing the foreigners could do would be to organise themselves into trades societies similar to ours, and endeavour to get their wages up to the same rate as ours, and then we could begin to discuss questions with them. That was our opinion about the matter, and I may just state that trades societies are being established in France and in Belgium rapidly, and they will have the tendency of raising

the wages and thereby remove that fear of competition that our English friends are so much alarmed about.

You yourself, as I understand, are not alarmed at that competition, and I gather from your evidence that your feeling of confidence arises from two facts, one being that you believe English material to be better material, and the other that English workmen are better workmen?—Yes, any person who understands anything of engineering and who put himself to the trouble of going through the Exhibition of 1862 must have seen at a glance the inferiority of the one work to the other. And in the 1867 Exhibition you will see no doubt the same strange-looking things that were to be seen at the Exhibition there.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) You did not go to Geneva and you did not go to this great Trade Conference which was held in London. Why did you not go to the great Trades Conference in London?—With regard to the Trades Conference in London our society and other large societies took no part in the proceedings, inasmuch as a large number of what is called the Working Men's Association, which convened the meeting, do not belong to any trade society at all, and we were determined not to identify ourselves with parties who do not belong to unions. Therefore, some of the conveners of the meeting not being unionists, we refused to connect ourselves with them in any shape or form.

(*Sir D. Gooch.*) Is that the society which Mr. Potter is connected with?—The society he belongs to consists of some 91 members, I believe.

You did not recognise him?—No.

(*Chairman.*) Does your society belong to any trades council?—Yes, the London Trades Council, composed of delegates from various trades.

Is that increasing?—I think not.

(*Mr. Booth.*) Have you any of the London Trades Council's rules with you?—They are simply for self government.

Are there no printed rules?—Yes, but they are simply rules prescribing certain hours of attending and so on. They do not interfere with disputes.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) Do they interfere with the internal working of the societies which belong to that Council?—Not in the slightest degree.

(*Mr. Booth.*) What is the object of that association?—It exists for the purpose of looking after Parliamentary affairs. For instance, looking after bills which might happen to be before Parliament which would affect the interests of working men. Its object is also to look after the interests of working men generally. For instance, if there was a dispute in any particular trade, representatives might go from that trade to the Council and make their case known. They would then give them a certificate to go to the different trades of London for support, that is to say if they deserved it.

(*Mr. Harrison.*) It is a purely deliberative body, is it not, without any functions beyond that?—Yes, without any functions beyond that.

(*Mr. Mathews.*) It is a little Parliament in fact?—Well, according to the views of some it is *very* little. . . .

(*Mr. Hughes.*) Your society has never adopted co-operation in any way, has it?—No, we have not adopted that principle, although I believe that three-fourths of our members believe in the principle, but they are opposed to the using of the funds of the society for that object. They say, 'If you are going to have a co-operative workshop, it must be one which we shall have in addition to the ordinary membership of the society, and then members can take up so many shares.'

(*Sir D. Gooch.*) When you say that you have not adopted co-operation, I presume your answer is limited to co-operation in working?—Yes. Many of our members belong to grocery and other stores.

(*Mr. Roebuck.*) Are you aware of the existence of the co-operative society at Crossley's, at Halifax?—Yes.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) There have been attempts amongst your members to form co-operative societies, have there not?—Yes.

But none have as yet succeeded?—No.

There is one I believe which was a co-operative society, but it became an ordinary shop?—Yes. I may be allowed to say here perhaps that it occurs to me that I omitted to mention just now one strike which we had—that was a strike out in Australia. The workmen demanded the eight hours and got it.

(*Sir E. W. Head.*) Did they draw upon your funds at home for support in that case?—No, they had a sufficient amount of

money amongst themselves; and with the money they derived from the members in work they succeeded in getting a rule laid down for eight hours a day.

(*Mr. Hughes.*) But I suppose that in equalising things at the end of the year your English funds made up to them anything they had lost?—Certainly. I may state that in our society we have an equalisation of money every 12 months, so that it matters not what branch pays away money; at the end of the 12 months, when the equalisation takes place, one branch is as rich as another.

(*Lord Elcho.*) You spoke of a Carpenters' Society whose rules are similar to your own; is that the society of which Mr. Applegarth is secretary?—Yes. Prior to their starting that society, they waited upon me and I furnished them with our books and all our documents, and that society may be said to be similar in every respect to our own.

The witness withdrew.

Trades Union 'Outrages'¹

[Extract from a review of the First Report of the Royal Commission on Trades Unions, 1867, written by an anonymous reviewer in the Quarterly Review, 1867. The writer, in a very long article, makes out the strongest possible case against Trades Unions, and ends with a demand for changes in the law which would in effect destroy the effectiveness of unions as trade societies. In the event, the Commissioners did not follow his view. Here are the relevant extracts dealing with the violent outrages which were considered by the Commission.]

... We beg the attention of the reader to the following instances, selected from the evidence taken before the Commission, begging him to consider the motives which must have prompted each act, and then whether it is likely that men embarked in such a career would stop short of whatever violence might be required to carry their points. A father must not employ his own children to work for him, without making them members of the Union. 'We, the operative plasterers of Bradford, do hereby give you notice that all your sons that are working as plasterers, which are above 21 years of age, are requested to join the Society; and, failing to do so, all our men will cease work on Monday morning, and not return again unless you pay all expenses of the strike.' The strike actually took place. ('Evidence', Q. 2971.)

The following letter was sent to Mr. Dixon, master plasterer,

¹ Our title—Eds.

of Bradford: 'We wish to inform you that you have not complied with our request, therefore we wish you to do so tonight, or all our men will cease work on Monday morning. PS. Please send an answer by six o'clock.' The request was for 21s. entrance for Mr. Dixon's two brothers, who were working at the trade without belonging to the Union. Mr. Dixon, being under heavy contracts, sent back word that he would comply. He received an answer that he must pay down the money at once, or the threat of a strike would be carried out. He paid the money. How far is this offence from extorting money by threats, and by how wide an interval is it separated from actual violence?—2979.

A master was requested by the Union to discharge two apprentices rather than two society men. He discharged the two men, and his work was picketed in consequence. Here we gain a step further. The Union takes out of the hands of the master the choice as to which of his workmen he shall discharge.—2957. A bookkeeper repainted the letters on a rod by which the work of Messrs. Worthington and Challinor, painters, was measured. They received this note: 'Sirs,—It having been brought before the meeting on Monday night that your bookkeeper has been doing some writing and painting, you are requested not to let him, he not being a painter. The Committee, Blackpool Operative House Painters' Association.'—3988. From the same committee: 'Mr. Foster. Sir,—You have three men in your employ that do not belong to any society. I am requested to inform you that if they do not become members of a society before the 11th of March next your shop will be called a Black Shop, and no society man will have to work in it.'—2991. During a bricklayers' strike a Mr. Robinson, of Darlington, a master, set to work to lay his own bricks. The labourers said they must leave off work, as they were ordered by the Lodge not to carry any material to an employer so long as the strike continued. So Mr. Robinson had to give up doing his own work.—2997.

Mr. Mault had seventy bricklayers drawn off his works at five minutes' notice because he would not discharge a non-society man of the name of Marsden. Marsden worked for a quarter of a day, and then said he had received an intimation

which made it advisable for him to leave. If he had not left, how far are we off outrages like those of Sheffield?—3000. As might be expected, this utter disregard of the rights and feelings of others lead, also, to bad faith in the execution of agreements. We have seen in the recent instance of the Operative Tailors a trial put off on the application of the defendants, on the undertaking to remove the pickets placed over the masters' shops, and, when the object had been gained, the agreement deliberately broken. The Operative Brickmakers of Birmingham agreed with the masters to submit differences to arbitration, with power to appoint an umpire. The rule was recently acted upon, and the men by a resolution pledged themselves to abide by the decision. The umpire decided against the men, and they, instead of submitting, immediately struck.—3047. At Stoke-upon-Trent much the same thing happened, except that the men accused the masters, without the slightest foundation for the charge, of interpolating the arbitration rule into the code to which they agreed, and forging the signature of their secretary.—A strike followed.—3061.

Here is a rule of the Bradford Lodge of the Labourers' Union: 'You are strictly cautioned not to overstep good rules by doing double the work you are required by the society, and causing others to do the same, in order to get a smile from the master. Such foolhardy and deceitful actions leave a great portion of good members out of employment all the year round. Certain individuals have been guilty, who will be expelled if they do not refrain.' We have many lamentations as to the superiority of foreign workmen. Can it well be otherwise, when wages are paid by the average, not by the worth of the individual, and any attempt to attract notice and win distinction is met by expulsion, that is, by the confiscation of the savings of a life?—3120. This is a rule of the Leeds Bricklayers' Labourers' Lodge. Remark the espionage: 'Any brother of the Union professing to carry more than the common number, which is eight bricks, shall be fined 1s. Any member knowing of the same shall be fined the same unless he gives the earliest information to the committee of management.'

The masons forbid the use of machinery for dressing stone, and consequently two valuable patents for obtaining a smooth

surface, one by grinding, and one by sawing, remain almost useless.—3209. The Manchester and Sheffield brickmakers refuse to use machine-made bricks. It was intimated to Mr. Carr, a mason and bricklayer of Sheffield, that it was dangerous to use machine-made bricks. He paid no attention, and his work was injured by being squirted over with gas-tar.—3219. Masons have a rule against the introduction of wrought stone, even from neighbouring quarries. This causes a great loss, for the stone is softer and easier wrought when first quarried. Mr. James Lord, of Heywood, allowed his masons, as work was scarce, to work stone in the winter. These very men struck work in the spring against the using of this very stone in different buildings, and thus inflicted great loss on their employer.—3216. The carpenters of Blackburn gave notice to the builders on the 16th of last November that they would not fix any machine-made work or mouldings that were worked outside Blackburn, on any job inside Blackburn, as they considered that there were plenty of machinists in Blackburn who could do the work just as well as people elsewhere.—3217.

The Plasterers' Society wrote to Mr. Peacock, of Scarborough: 'The operative plasterers are bound not to work with any bricklayers, or to cover any work of any description that has been previously commenced by any person or persons but plasterers. If you wish to finish your job with plasterers, you must stop the bricklayers from plastering.'—3279. Some bricklayers passed by the works of Mr. Day, of Bolton, and found a carpenter enlarging the holes left for the posts in the brickwork. Mr. Day was fined £2, which he paid.—3280. The aperture for a door had to be altered. The carpenter, who was waiting till it was done to put in the frame, pulled out some loose bricks. The master, Mr. Colbeck, was fined £2, which he paid. Are we not rapidly tending to the institution of caste as found in India?—3280. A building at Powicke was being erected by bricklayers, some of whom lived on the spot, and some at Worcester, four miles off. The Worcester men asked for walking time, that is, that the walk should be counted in the day's work. This was granted. The same allowance was asked for the men on the spot who had no walk, and when this was refused a strike took place.—3263. The masons object to gaslight, and the

brickmakers insist that all bricks shall be of the same size. If a town master goes out to do work, half the men must belong to the town, and, if the number be uneven, so must the odd man.

Of the charitable feelings the Unions promote, take the following instance: Two men had refused to join in a strike at Glasgow. One was allowed to make his peace with the Union by a payment of 30s. From the other they would take no fine. The expression was, 'We shall wring the bowels out of him.' He was at last readmitted on a payment of £3. His offence was that he had spoken against the strike. He owed his pardon to his employer, who refused to desert him.—3516. A Glasgow firm were erecting a building. The contractor for the plastering failed before his work was done, being in debt to his workmen for a week's wages. The Union would not allow the work to go on till the owner of the house, who owed the men nothing, not only paid the men for the work done, but for a week during which they had done no work. Thus is the machinery of Unions employed to make one pay another's debt.—3595.

It is clear that if the 'Trades' Unions, in exercising these irresponsible powers, do guide themselves by the ordinary principles of justice and fair play, if they hear statements from both sides, for instance, consider the case as it affects not only themselves, but others, and eschew all secret and underhand proceedings, they will offer a striking contrast to all other depositaries of such powers. We have seen what their powers are. Let us see how they exercise them. The Union forms a court, but a court which acts only on *ex parte* information, and without local knowledge. Thus the masons of Carlisle and Exeter, for instance, decide on the wages that shall be demanded by the masons of Wolverhampton, guiding themselves not by the circumstances of the trade, but by the necessities of the employers. The object is to find a place where labour is in demand, to withdraw labour by a strike, and to counteract the tendency of other labourers to flow thither by picketing, thus at once cutting off a source of employment, and depriving the whole trade of the benefit which the tendency of labour to go where it is most wanted must otherwise produce. Mr. Russell, of Bolton, was fined £5, which he paid, by the operative bricklayers of Bolton, for setting a mason to widen a window which

he could not get finished because the bricklayers were drinking, and would not work. Of course he had no opportunity of being heard before the tribunal which imposed the fine, consisting, as in all probability it did, of the delinquents themselves.—3971.

Mr. Stone, of Newton-in-the-Willows, was fined 15s. because his foreman remonstrated with his men for talking and smoking when they should have been at work; and the foreman's son was fined 5s. for taking part with his father.—3973. Mr. Walter Scott is the largest builder in Newcastle. In the fortnightly return of a Trades' Union there appears an application from the Masons' Lodge of Newcastle, requesting that it be put to the vote whether Mr. Scott's country jobs should not be stopped by the withdrawal of masons, and the firm, if necessary, 'shelved for eighteen months'. This application is supported by assertions, utterly untrue, that Mr. Scott had busied himself in opposing the nine hour movement. The return is a secret document, and, while deliberations were being held concerning him which might have involved his ruin, Mr. Scott was entirely unaware of them, and only learnt them from the accident that this secret return fell into the hands of Mr. Mault, who published it in his newspaper, and thus for the first time apprised Mr. Scott of his danger. A trial is going on, and the first the accused hears of it is by the newspaper. We must go back, not to the Guilds, but to the secret tribunals of the middle ages to find a parallel to such proceedings.—4039. The machinery of strikes is used, as we have seen, to make one man pay another's debt; here is an instance where it was used to punish a successful competitor. Mr. Murdy, of Nottingham, made an estimate for plastering a row of houses, which was accepted. The trades had in contemplation a co-operative society, and competed for the work. When they found that they were not successful, they sent to the builder to say that they would not allow the work to be done by contract, and so the contract was taken away from Mr. Murdy. Not content with this, they sent a circular to every master builder in Nottingham to this effect: 'It has been resolved by the central committee of the building trades, that you do not accept any tender from Messrs. Hill and Murdy from this date until we come to more amicable terms than we are at present with them.'—4058.

Let any one read these instances, abridged from many more which were laid before the Royal Commission, and ask himself whether there is any principle of personal liberty, of fair play between man and man, of justice or of honesty, which these bodies in their self-constituted omnipotence do not infringe? Supposing we knew nothing of Trades' Unions except what is now told us, could we believe that their excesses were limited even to such cases as these? What reflecting man would doubt for a moment that the means of compulsion would grow in violence and atrocity just in proportion to the resistance encountered? People accustomed to gain their own way, and to gain it by such means, are not likely to suffer themselves to be defeated while anything was left untried which could strike terror into their intended victims. People who deliberately set themselves to starve a fellow-workman because he will not strike, or to ruin an employer because he prefers to manage his business himself, instead of carrying it on under the dictation of the Union, are not likely to stop there if that does not succeed. From such conduct to actual violence the step is short and certain. We feel sure that this, though true, is not the whole truth; that where there is so much there must be more.

Of the Sheffield outrages it is unnecessary here to speak. They have been read and shuddered at in every corner of the kingdom. Robbery, fire-raising, and murder, glozed over by the most odious hypocrisy, have been the weapons with which more than one Trades' Union in Sheffield has fought its battles. But even this is not the worst of it. To understand how fearful an instrument a Trades' Union is for destroying all feeling of right and wrong in large bodies of men, we have only to consider the treatment of the loathsome miscreants Broadhead and Crookes. In October last year Broadhead wrote a letter which must have satisfied any one who read it attentively that he had a hand in the Hereford Street outrage, for in it he speaks of the victim as almost as bad as the perpetrator. The press commented severely on this statement. Broadhead offered his resignation as Secretary of the Saw Grinders' Union. The subject was considered for six hours with closed doors. They passed a vote of confidence in him, and requested him to retain his office. Then came the disclosures of this year. It appeared that Broadhead

retained in his service hired murderers, and that to pay them he embezzled the funds of the Society, and falsified the accounts. The Saw Grinders' Union refused to expel Broadhead on two grounds: one, that he had risked his life on their behalf, the other, that the law afforded no remedy for the offences which he took upon himself to punish with death. The non-Union saw grinders, who were clear of his former crimes, requested him to assist them in forming an Union of their own. His public house is frequented by numerous admirers of murder, 'considered as one of the fine arts', and he is much astonished that the magistrates have refused to renew his license, being apparently of opinion that the certificate of indemnity cancels the guilt and the infamy, as well as the penal consequences, of crime.

The support that opinion in Sheffield gives to crime is even more hideous than the crime itself; just as it has been always felt in Ireland that there is one thing worse than Irish agrarian outrage, and that is the shelter and sympathy which it receives from the peasantry. The one proves individual wickedness, the other the depravity of a whole community.

Perhaps from the weariness and disgust which the subject naturally inspires, the revelations of the doings of the brick-makers at Manchester have attracted less attention than the exploits of the saw-grinders of Sheffield. This is unfair. They are even more remarkable; and if they do not obtain as much notice, it should not be '*Carent quia vate sacro*'. The principles of the bricklayers are absolutist; their means of enforcing obedience are gently graduated from pecuniary fines up to murder. When the lesser penalty is imposed, the heavier always lurks in the background. Their policy is not enlightened. They will have no employment of non-Union men—either with Union men or alone; no machine-made bricks; no transference of bricks from one district to another; no payment for labour except what they please. A master brickmaker, not a member of the Union, is forced to pay them £1 a year, in order to be allowed to work at his own trade. They have an alliance with the bricklayers, so that no bricks can be laid of which they disapprove. They fine a master £5 for complaining of their work; he pays the fine, and considers himself well treated because they have not destroyed all the property they might. They forbid a

master who has 300,000 bricks on the Ashton side of the canal to send them to Manchester; and a violation of this rule they visit with the destruction of 40,000 bricks. They have, like the Education Department, their inspectors, who make regular rounds to see that their rules are observed. A master dismisses some Union men: his shed is set on fire by naphtha, and much property destroyed. Another master gives up business in consequence of a threat to shoot him. Another gives up business 'because it is not safe at nights'. Another, 'because it is better than to lose his life'. Capital seems effectually driven away, and the master reduced to a state little superior to that of the workman.

Needles are put by the thousand into the clay to lame the hands of those who mould it. A damaged article is bought for the purpose, the point being more important than the eye. Blowing up with gunpowder is just as well understood at Manchester as at Sheffield. Watchmen are wounded in the head with slugs—a policeman is murdered outright. Horses are hamstrung; and in one case a mare, we suppose a favourite animal, is tied up, shavings placed under her, and burnt to death, the execution lasting two dreadful hours, and leaving its record in the fact that the creature in its long-drawn agony pulled down the hay-rack to which she was attached. We read of stabs with knives, of pistols discharged, of persons who cannot swim thrown into deep water, of waylaying and beating; and one person nearly killed because he was taken for another. Such are the revelations of Manchester; and we fear no contradiction when we claim for them a place side by side with the disclosures of Sheffield.

This, then, is our case against the Trades Unions. We have by no means heard all that is to be alleged against them, and the evidence in their favour is utterly futile. We say that they injure in the most vital manner the interest of the very working class whom they are meant to aid, that they threaten some branches of manufactures with extinction, and seriously limit the diffusion of others, that they are carried on by means fatal to every right that a free country respects, that they are ruinous to the legitimate ambition of industry and merit, that they can only be conducted by a systematic breach of the law, and that

they run through the whole gamut of crime, from a mere conspiracy in restraint of trade, to robbery, arson, mutilation, and murder. We do not say that they are all alike. A vast interval separates such an association as the Amalgamated Carpenters and Joiners from the Bricklayers of Lancashire or the Saw Grinders of Sheffield. But they all contain within them the germs and elements of crime, they are all founded on the right of the majority to coerce the minority, on the absolute subjugation of the one to the many, and the employment of such means as may be necessary in order to give effect to these false and dangerous principles. Is such a state of things as we have described to be tolerated in this country? Is everything which has hitherto been the pride of Englishmen to be sacrificed to the vain attempt to overthrow by brute force the most clearly established principles? Are we tamely to stand by and see these bodies ruin our trade and manufactures, and tolerate a progressive demoralisation of classes destined henceforth to have a potential voice in the government of this country, to which no limit can be assigned short of the worst and blackest of crimes?

TRACTS FOR TRADES UNIONISTS.—No. 1¹

Imprisonment for Breach of Contract

OR

The Master & Servant Act

BY

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of Lincoln's Inn, Barrister-at-Law

The Act of 1867 was an important gain to the working classes, and was intended by its promoters as a measure of justice and equality. But it did not do its work completely, and the time has come to amend it. Its main object was to abolish the immoral and one-sided principle which made the contracts of workmen enforceable by imprisonment. But it really let in that principle again by a side wind. The habit that justices had got of sending a workman to prison for simple neglect of work was too strong to be broken off; and whilst the breach of agreement by other classes means a civil damage and a law-suit, the breach of an agreement by workmen is a crime, and means—a prison.

Imprisonment for breach of civil contract is a flagrant exception to ordinary rules. It is entirely unknown in the ordinary civil law of Contract. It is contrary to the whole current of modern legislation. What is the ordinary course of civil law? A

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breach of contract, as such, is the subject of a civil remedy. It may be redressed by an action for damages, or a suit in chancery. But, in either case, it is not regarded as a crime. It forms a right of action, a subject for litigation not for criminal prosecution. The defendant has at his disposal the ordinary resources of a party in a suit. He has ample time to prepare his defence; and if he fails, the worst that can befall him is the payment of damages or the performance of his contract, with costs. But, by the old law in contracts about service, all this was different. For the servant to fail in performing his contract was a crime. He was arrested on warrant, carried like a pickpocket before a magistrate, and summarily sent to gaol. To fail in paying £10,000 at the date agreed, was a subject for a lawsuit. To miss a day's work was a matter for prison. This monstrous injustice the Act of 1867 endeavoured to amend; and Lord Elcho and his friends, who promoted the Bill, sincerely believed they had done so. Unluckily, they were induced to let in the old iniquity in a clause—a clause, in its language scrupulously equal. The Master and Servant Act, 1867, provides all the civil remedies for breach of contracts equally on both sides, and contains a convenience course of procedure. But it goes on to give the Court, in what it calls aggravated cases, power to imprison the defaulting party for three months. The workman under this Act can be dealt with, not only by summary process, but with penal consequences. And for breach of agreement, which the magistrate may look on as aggravated, he may be sent to gaol like a common thief.

The contracts of commercial and ordinary affairs often involve very great interests. Men are ruined, and families are desolated every day by deliberate breach of solemn engagements. When a contractor puts bad material in a bridge or a ship, he risks the lives of hundreds. The overtrading of a few speculators may bring on a national panic, and the jobs of a knot of directors cause more suffering than a bad winter. Now a breach of contract of this class amounts morally to a public crime, but where no penal statute is broken it is absolutely unpunished. Yet if a workman neglects a day's labour (price, say 5s.), he is liable to three months' imprisonment. The sudden loss of the workman's labour may often be a serious matter,

but it is preposterous to pretend that it can approach in consequence to the stoppage of a bank. Usually the only contract of labour which the workman can break is measured by, at most, a few pounds, and the injury which his breach of contract involves seldom passes beyond a temporary inconvenience. When a workman in breaking a contract maliciously exposes property to injury, that is itself a specific offence, as if an engineer were to abandon an engine at full steam, or a driver a horse in the highway. Malicious injury to property is a totally different question. What we are now dealing with is breach of contract; and the fact is obvious that the breach of contract by a workman is ordinarily a far less injury than a breach of contract by a capitalist. Yet the capitalist is answerable only in a civil action, which he may fight for years; and the workman, for the smaller harm, is summarily sent to prison for three months.

Let us put two cases side by side. A manufacturer has agreed with a rich neighbour to buy extensive new premises. He makes 50 contracts, all dependent on his having the works ready by a certain day, and he engages 1,000 extra hands. A rival in trade steps in, induces the neighbour to break the contract, and leave our manufacturer in the lurch. What then? He may have his action at law or his suit in Chancery, but neither will help him at the pinch. Litigation may be protracted for years, and his rich neighbour may drag him from Court to Court, and, if there be a screw loose in his case, ultimately defeat him with costs. There is no summary remedy and no criminal law available. Yet the private wrong and the public inconvenience may be hardly calculable.

Turn to the other case. The same manufacturer finds that one of his workmen engaged by the week has left his work. The man may have had a tempting offer of higher wages; he may have had a dispute with a foreman; he may have a wife dying at home. What follows? The delinquent workman may be summoned next day to a police-court. It is true he may tell his own story; but then he will be cross-examined. He has none of the advantages of the civil suitor. He is in the position of the prisoner at the bar, and yet a prisoner who may be cross-examined. In order to prove a verbal agreement at which, perhaps, no person but employer and workman were present, the man's own evi-

dence is essential. The Act permits him to give it. But then he runs the risk of being cross-examined by a skilled advocate. And thus we come to the anomaly that a man may be sent to prison for three months by means of evidence mainly extracted by questioning him at the bar. The value of his labour for the week may be 30s. The loss caused by his sudden absence may be £5 or £10. Let us even assume that it amounted to £50—a most unlikely case. Let us assume that his misconduct was patent, and his act wilful. Still, can it in public or private injury, can it in moral criminality, be compared to the conduct of many a civil suitor who has wantonly and (morally speaking) fraudulently ruined hundreds? Yet what follows? The truant workman is sent to prison for three months. If he asks for a jury to assess the damages caused by his neglect, even if he were to show that he is able to pay such damages, he is told to hold his tongue. He goes off in the van with burglars and pickpockets. Not only does he suffer a degrading punishment, but he suffers a fine of some £20 in loss of wages, and his family must shift for themselves. This is the end of a breach of contract by a workman, which may be valued, perhaps, at £10 damages. Yet the damage valued at £10,000, done by a great capitalist who breaks a contract, does not involve imprisonment. Nay, if there be a technical flaw in a long course of litigation, it may actually end in his gaining the cause with costs.

It is quite true that the power of inflicting three months' imprisonment, without the option of a fine, is confined to cases of aggravated injury or misconduct. But that does not affect the argument. Cases of aggravated injury and misconduct are heard every day in Civil Courts, and it would be fortunate if the authors of them were always so much as cast in damages. On the contrary, they are very often successful on technical grounds. But whether successful or not, they are not liable to penal consequences, and have not a prison before them as the issue of losing their cause. But the real evil of the clause is that this 'aggravated misconduct' is a matter entirely in the discretion of the Judge; and magistrates have got into the habit of giving it a rather wide significance. The old law authorised the magistrate to imprison for any breach of agreement, however slight and excusable, and the spirit of the old law survives, in spite of

qualifying words. It must not be forgotten that, up and down the country, labourers are constantly imprisoned for what amounts to mere breach of contract, without any aggravation at all. The condition that it should be 'aggravated misconduct' is in practice loosely understood or wholly ignored; and 'aggravated misconduct' is too often interpreted as meaning what the complaining party decidedly dislikes. The other day two workmen left their employment in Kingston, attracted by the high wages offered at the gas works during strike, and engaged themselves for the vacant places. Men, as we know, who had struck, were being sentenced every day to prison under the clause as to 'aggravated misconduct'. Yet those men who had come up from Kingston to take the places of the men on strike and do their work were sent to prison by the same rule, though, since their conduct tended to diminish the evils caused by the strike one would have looked at it leniently. We are told again that in the rural districts it is the rule for justices to treat the condition of 'aggravated misconduct' as mere surplusage—as, in legal significance, equivalent to leaving employment. Thus, an Essex farmer, who gives names and addresses, including his own, writes publicly on the case of a man who was earning 7s. a week for 14 hours' labour, and who left this valuable situation for work in another part of the country. On returning to his home, six months afterwards, he was sent to prison under this section. Certainly one can hardly imagine conduct less aggravated, one might venture to say more venial, than that of leaving an employment of 7s. a week for a few shillings more. Another man (name also given), who asked for a rise of wages, was told by his employer if he did not like his wages to leave his place. He took the employer at his word, but he found to his cost that he had to appear at the Petty Sessions, and that employers regard this too scrupulous literalism in carrying out orders as 'aggravated misconduct'.

I am perfectly aware that the Act is in language strictly impartial as between employer and employed. Like many other well-meant contrivances of draughtsmen, this does not at all work in practice. I presume that no one will assert that employers never break agreements or do not occasionally dismiss their workmen without notice, or without cause, and that, by them-

selves or their agents, with circumstances of misconduct and injury. I apprehend that in town or country this is a pretty frequent occurrence; yet can any one show a case of an employer or manager being sent to prison for three months under the Master and Servant Act? The workmen, on the other hand, go to gaol by scores. Thus the penalties of this clause, verbally so equal, fall exclusively on one class. There is something refreshing in the thought of a pair of manufacturers or squires in the Commission giving a neighbour three months of gaol for a harsh act done in a fit of temper. The idea of their doing it is ridiculous, and, therefore, to draw up a solemn Act of Parliament to enable them to do it (if so disposed) is a little hypocritical. Besides, in practice it appears that the remedies of Master and Servant are not the same or reciprocal. The other day a police magistrate of the Metropolis was applied to by a journeyman tailor to make an order under the Act for recovery of wages in lieu of legal notice. The magistrate was obliged to tell the man that, in his opinion, the Act did not enable him to make such an order on the Master, though it undoubtedly enables him not only to fine the Servant but to send him to prison. There is thus no real equality in the Act. It fails to give the workman even the remedy for unpaid wages, while it subjects him to fine and imprisonment. If imprisonment is technically possible for the master, it is, in fact, a mere phrase on the Statute Book, which no one regards. Workmen, as a fact, are imprisoned, and masters, as a fact, are not, though the misconduct, we may assume, is not always on one side. What we need in laws is not merely scrupulous impartiality in language, but equal effect in practice.

It was urged on the passing of the Act, and is often repeated, that the leaving employment by workmen may cause very serious damage, and may actually affect property and involve loss. But what kind of breach of agreement may not do the same? When a great trader, banker, or manufacturer breaks a contract, the consequences are usually far more serious than any that are caused when a workman, or even a gang of workmen, neglect their duty. It is merely the breach of a civil agreement, and in social importance and disastrous consequences it is trifling in comparison with the formidable kinds of civil injuries which occur daily in the course of business, and which

we are content to leave to Civil, and not to Criminal, Law. People seem to think that they have answered this argument when they show that instances occur when actual injury to business, or loss of money, may arise by workmen breaking their contracts. How am I to keep my engagements, says a farmer or manufacturer, unless I can send my men to gaol when they leave their work? How, we may answer, is the poor workman to get on who can't get his wages paid? How is the miner to do who can only get paid in bad goods? How is the seaman to do, who is sent to sea in a rotten ship, or with insufficient stores? How is the poor seamstress to get on, or the small shopkeeper, who can't get their bills paid? When the rich are sent to prison for breaking these contracts, it will be time enough to imprison men for leaving work.

We are constantly told that it is no use to sue workmen, because either they could not pay damages, or the Union would pay them instead. As to the latter argument, nothing can be more unjust. In the first place, Unions do not, as a rule, pay the fines imposed by law on members. It is not in their duty, or in their rules. They have no funds which could be properly so applied without a vote of the whole society. There is no proof of any such practice, and none was alleged to the late Commission. Besides, the Master and Servant Act is far more often used to oppress non-unionists, who have got no one to pay fines or damages for them. And even if the practice was common, it is not the habit of Courts to inquire who pays damages or fines, so long as they are paid. Nothing is more common than a public subscription to support a defendant in a trial. It is the rule in all political and ecclesiastical trials. There is now a public subscription to assist Mr. Plimsoll against his wealthy opponents. Yet it would be monstrous injustice to say that as Mr. Plimsoll will not be personally liable for damages or fine, Mr. Plimsoll, if unsuccessful, ought to be sent to prison.

To every argument as to the inequality of the present laws there is one stock answer. It is, no doubt, exceptional, they say, to send men to prison for breaking a contract; but what can be done? How are workmen otherwise to be reached? Workmen, they say, have no capital, and cannot pay heavy damages. That may be very true, but it is no justification for taking them out of

civil jurisdiction and putting them into the penal. Their want of capital may be very shocking; but it does not make them criminals. Crime is a public offence, not measured by the money in the pocket of the criminal. If a man is ruined in a law-suit, he is not a felon. There are plenty of people who cannot pay damages—whom lawyers call not worth ‘powder and shot’—but we don’t proceed against them as criminals. Contracts are broken a hundred times a day by men whom it is no use to sue. And a Bill to make all breaches of contract alike punishable with imprisonment would be received with a storm of ridicule. What would it be? It would be as much as to abolish civil courts altogether, to hold no civil justice, to administer no law but criminal law. Civil courts sit for the most part to determine breaches of contract or civil injury. If every defendant against whom civil injury was alleged was turned into a prisoner in the dock, and the loss of every action meant three months’ imprisonment, England would indeed become a land of equal laws for all classes, but it would become a very unpleasant land for any class. Yet one class now in respect of agreements about their own labour are in this position, a position which other classes would regard as monstrous injustice.

Let us assume simply an Act which made breach of civil contract punishable as a crime, where the party was unable to pay damages. What would be the result? Every debtor is under contract to pay his debts. An insolvent debtor, is therefore in the position assumed. He has broken a civil contract and cannot even pay damages. The consequence would be, that every insolvent would be assumed to be a criminal; would be tried summarily with thieves and murderers; and would be sentenced to longer or shorter terms of imprisonment. That is to say, the whole of the law of bankruptcy would become merged in the general criminal law. Merchants and shopkeepers would appear in crowds at the Old Bailey. And without any fraud, without any criminal conduct, other than neglecting a civil contract to pay money, bankrupts and insolvents would repent at leisure under three months of gaol.

The argument that no workman can pay money, and therefore must go to prison, is not only outrageously unjust, but utterly anomalous. The baker and grocer who supplies the

workman with goods on his contract to pay has no such remedy. A baker who is £2 out of pocket cannot carry a workman before a magistrate, and give the man three months of gaol. Why should the employer, who loses £2 by the man's absence from work, be able to do so? If a workman agrees with me to let me his lodging, or his cottage, and then transfers it to another, I must go for my remedy to a civil court. I cannot take him summarily before a magistrate and punish him with imprisonment.

On what grounds, then, are we to retain the antiquated injustice under which the agreement of a workman to labour is protected by criminal powers? The plea that the employer has no protection otherwise is all nonsense. The baker and the grocer are not protected—why is the employer? If he is afraid of his men leaving work in the middle of the week he can protect himself—as is often done in large works—by retaining a portion of the wages in hand as a material guarantee. This plan is adopted in many cases, and is a more than adequate protection. The power, over and above this, of using the police force of the nation—of enforcing a trivial contract by prison—is a miserable remnant of class oppression. It is a right which employers of labour retain, but which no other relation of life requires or demands; it is a power which, as against themselves, the middle classes would stubbornly resist to a man. It has now culminated in the vindictive tyranny with which the gas stokers' 'revolt' was suppressed, and it has reached a pitch of injustice, at which it behoves the self-respect of the whole working community to determine that it must end.

The Social Future of the Working Class

A LECTURE

Delivered to a Meeting of Trades Unionists, May 7, 1868

BY

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‘The working class is not, properly speaking, a class at all, but constitutes the body of society. From it proceed the various special classes, which we may regard as organs necessary to that body.’—AUGUSTE COMTE.

We live in a day when social questions are for the first time contesting precedence with political questions. In the first French revolution the distinction was not apparent; at all events it was not recognised even by sharp-sighted observers, though we, looking back to those times, can detect the signs of it. During the reign of Louis Phillippe—from 1830, that is, to 1848—the distinction became every year more marked. It is the fashion to speak of the revolution of 1848 as a very small affair—as a feeble imitation of the old revolution. If looked at from a political point of view, in the narrowest sense of that term, it certainly was a much smaller affair than the old revolution. But to those who have realised in their minds that there has been in

truth but one revolution, which began in 1789 and has been going on ever since, and that the year 1848 marks its transition from the purely political to the social phase,—to such persons, I say, the last epoch will seem even more momentous than the first. The attempt of 1848 was a failure, no doubt. But the history of the French revolution was not closed in 1848, as most of us here present will live to see.

In England we have travelled the same path, though hitherto without such violent shocks. We are all of us, French and English alike, moving rapidly towards the most fundamental revolution Europe has yet undergone; a revolution in comparison with which the great political changes in the time of our grandfathers, and even the great religious changes three centuries ago, were, I had almost said, insignificant. I will not pretend to say how far workmen may have clearly realised to themselves this prospect. I am inclined to think that not many of them have more than a vague conception of it, although they are instinctively working towards it. But the middle class have no conception of it at all. I am not speaking of the stupidly ignorant part of that body, but of its more enlightened and active members. They sincerely believe that the series of political changes which they commenced in England forty years ago is nearly completed. When they shall have abolished the State Church, reduced taxation some what, obtained the ballot and equal electoral districts, or something like it, they think reform will be completed, and that England will enter upon a sort of golden age. They do not contemplate any serious change, either political or industrial. Politically, we are still to be governed by Parliament. In industry we are to have the reign of unlimited competition.

Now we can all of us understand that some men, either from education or mental constitution, do not believe in progress at all. They think that all change is for the worse, unless it is a change backwards; and they are convinced that nothing but firmness is wanting to resist change. There always have been such men, and we can understand them. But what is less easy to understand is that there should be men who believe heartily in progress, and yet shut their eyes deliberately to the goal whither we are tending. The truth is that their belief in progress

does not rest on any reasonable basis. It is nothing better than a superstitious optimism, a lazy, semi-religious idea that the world must have a natural tendency to get better. As for what getting better means, that they settle by their own likes and dislikes. Consequently the middle-class man interprets it to mean a reign of unlimited competition and individual freedom; while the workman understands it to be a more equal division of the products of industry. Although the workman's circumstances have led him to a truer conception of progress, perhaps he has not arrived at it on much more reasonable grounds than those on which the middle-class man has arrived at his. For, after all, it does not follow because we long for a certain state of society that therefore we are tending towards it.

The lot of the poor is a hard lot; there is no denying that. With a very large number of them life is absolute misery from birth to death. Though they may not actually starve, they are more or less hungry from one week's end to another; their dull round of toil occupies the whole day; their homes are squalid and frightful, seldom free from disease, and the heartrending incidents of disease, when aggravated by poverty. For them life is joyless, changeless, hopeless. 'They wait for death, but it cometh not; they rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they can find the grave.' Those who have mixed with the very poor, and have been startled by the strange calmness with which they contemplate and speak of death, whether of themselves or their relatives, will not say that this picture is much over-drawn. But it is not of this poorest class that I now wish to speak. I say that the lot of the skilled artisan earning his 30s. or 35s. a week (when he is not out of employment) is a hard lot. Perhaps it may seldom or never happen to him to go for a day with his hunger only half satisfied. But his position compared with that of a non-workman is one of great discomfort. People often seem to forget this.

It is not uncommon for rich men, when addressing an audience of workmen to say, 'My friends, *I* am a working man. I have been a working man all my life. I have been working with my brain as you have with your hands.' Yes, but there is just that difference. The one man has risen, say, at eight in the morning, from a comfortable bed, has come downstairs to a

comfortable breakfast, read his newspaper, reached his place of business towards eleven o'clock, and then worked perhaps hard enough for some hours, but in a comfortable office, and with interest in his work so intense that he perhaps prefers it to any amusement, and then back to his comfortable dinner and bed. The other man has risen perhaps before daybreak, has toiled ten or twelve hours, it may be under a broiling sun, or a chilling rain, or under other conditions equally disagreeable, and at work which cannot have very much interest for him, first, because it is monotonous, secondly, because the product will not be his when he has produced it. He has snatched his coarse food at intervals during the day, and has returned at night to an uncomfortable home. I think rich people are too apt to forget that, though habit counts for much, a poor man's muscles, lungs, and stomach, are, after all, not very unlike their own, and that no amount of custom makes such a life otherwise than disagreeable and even painful to him; and that the main question for him in reference to civilisation will be, how it alleviates his condition.

How are we to answer that question? Everyone is familiar with the hymns of triumph that are raised from time to time on the platform and in the press. We need not enter into particulars, because no one disputes that, so far as they go, they do point to progress of a certain kind. No one disputes that the production and accumulation of wealth is an element of progress; but it is only one element, and if even this is confined to a comparatively small section of the community, it must be admitted either that society as a whole is not progressing, or that its progress must be proved by somewhat better evidence than the statistics paraded in budget speeches and newspaper articles.

There is no question about the material progress of the non-workman class. There are many thousands of houses in London infinitely more commodious and luxurious than the palaces of Plantagenet kings. But there is very great question whether the workmen generally have made any real progress in comfort. Some of them have, no doubt. The skilled artisan in London gets enough to eat. He is perhaps no better lodged than his forefathers, but he dresses better, and he has greater opportuni-

ties of enjoying himself and moving about to better himself. But among the agricultural labourers what state of things do we find? In many parts of England they are positively worse off than they were a hundred years ago. In the Eastern Counties, where agriculture is carried on by the newest lights of science the horrible gang-system has come into existence within the present century. Nor is such misery confined to agricultural labourers. It has been proved in official reports that the workmen in such extensive trades as shoe-making, silk-weaving, and stocking-weaving, are on an average worse fed than the Lancashire operatives were during the cotton famine.

Now, wretchedness of this terrible kind does not exist even among barbarous nations and savage tribes. The child of the North American Indian, or the Caffre, or the Esquimaux, does not begin to work in a mill or in an agricultural gang almost as soon as it can walk. It gets better food than the English child, and leads a healthier and more enjoyable life. The West Indian negro has been treated as an irreclaimable savage because he will not toil like an English labourer, and the reason assigned is that he has plenty to eat and drink without working hard for it. I fancy most English labourers wish they could say the same. Really, if progress and civilisation mean nothing but an increase of wealth, irrespective of its distribution, Rousseau had much reason to prefer the state of nature. It is childish to remind the poor man that his ancestor under the Plantagenet kings had no chimney to his hut, no glass in his windows, no paper on his walls, no cheap calico, no parliamentary trains, no penny newspapers. He was no worse off in these respects than the Plantagenet king himself, who was equally without chimneys, glass windows, calico, railways, and penny newspapers. There are parts of the world now where the labourer is still in that condition. But he gets sound and healthy sleep out of the straw spread on the floor of his windowless hut, which is more than three or four families huddled together in a single room in St. Giles's can do, though they may have a glazed window and a chimney. A poor Englishman might be ashamed to walk about in a good stout sheepskin; but he is often clad in garments much less warm and durable. What sort of progress is this, in which the larger part of the community remains as

miserable, if not more miserable, than in a state of barbarism? If progress is necessarily so one-sided, it were better—I say it deliberately—it were better it ceased. It were better that all were poor together than that this frightful contrast should exist to shake men's faith in the eternal principles of justice.

Happily, we are not shut up to so discouraging a conclusion. If we look at the whole history of our race in Western Europe, instead of studying one short chapter of it alone, we shall soon see what its progress has been. The labouring class have steadily advanced in dignity and influence. Once they were slaves, with no more rights than horses and oxen. Then they were serfs, with certain rights, but still subject to grievous oppression and indignities. Then they became free hired labourers, nominally equal with the upper class before the law, but in practice treated as an inferior race, and themselves looking on the rich with much deference and awe. *Now* we have come to a time when the workmen are almost everywhere standing on their rights, and resisting what they deem unfair or oppressive. They have learnt the secret of combination. With freedom and dignity has come confidence—confidence in each other. They have grasped the idea that the main object of government and industrial organisation should be *their* comfort and happiness. What is more, everybody is beginning to hold the same language. Every proposal publicly made, whether to destroy or create, is represented as for the good of the lower classes. The very employers who are trying to destroy your trade societies profess to be doing it out of pure love for you. How astonishing and incomprehensible would all this have been—I do not say to the ancient slave-owner, or to the mediæval baron—but to the wealthy man of the last century. Is not this progress? What if a minority only of the workmen have as yet derived any benefit from the increased production of wealth? Is it nothing that the arms are being forged with which all shall at length get their share? Material improvement has always begun, and always will begin, not with those who need it most, but with those who need it least; and the higher classes of workmen are now making the experiment which the lowest will repeat after them.

Once firmly grasped, this truth throws a flood of light on history, and makes clear what at first sight is so obscure—the

unbroken, continuous progress of society. We see that even in the so-called dark ages, when the splendour of Roman civilisation appeared to be extinguished by the barbarian—when science, art, and literature were lost and forgotten, and the world seemed to have retrograded ten centuries—even then, in that dark hour, our race was accomplishing the most decided step forward that it has ever made. When the philosophers and poets and artists of Greece were lavishing their immortal works on small communities of free men—when the warriors and statesmen of Rome were building up the most splendid political fabric that the world has seen—the masses were sunk in a state of brutal slavery. But when savage tribes, with uncouth names and rude manners, had poured over Europe, when a squalid barbarism had superseded the elegance and luxury of ancient society, when kings could not read, and priests could not write, when trade and commerce had relapsed into Oriental simplicity, when men thought that the end of a decayed and dying world was surely near—then were the masses, the working men, accomplishing unnoticed their first great step from slavery to serfdom.

What I have already said amounts to this: that the improvement of the condition of the working class is the most important element of human progress—so important that even if we were to make it the sole object and test of our public life we could not justly be said to be taking a one-sided view of political and social questions. I shall endeavour presently to draw a picture of the workman's life, as it ought to be, and, as I believe, it will be in the future. But I must first examine some of the means by which the transition is being effected.

I will put aside the various schemes of Socialists and Communists, which have found so many supporters on the Continent. Widely as they differ from one another, I believe they all agree in demanding that the State shall intervene, more or less, in the direction of industry. Now that opinion has never found much favour in England, nor is there at the present time any large body of workmen who support it. In France the first idea of every reformer or innovator is to act through the Government. This tendency arises partly from the jealousy with which all Governments in that country have repressed voluntary

association, but partly also from the logical and orderly character of the French mind, which abhors anything partial or patchy either in thought or action. But in England, where there has always been considerable facility for private and associated action, it is our way rather to depend upon ourselves than to wait till we have a Government of our way of thinking. Hence the only two methods which have any serious pretensions to promote the elevation of workmen in England have both of them sprung, not from the brains of philosophers, but from the practical efforts of workmen themselves. This is shown by the very language we employ to describe them. In France the labour question has meant the discussion of the rival schools, the Economic School, the school of Fourier, the school of Proudhon, the school of Louis Blanc, of Cabet, of Pierre Leroux, and so on. In England we do not talk of schools, but of Unionism and Co-operation, which began in a practical form, and have continued practical. There can be no doubt that all workmen who care for the future of their class are look-to one of these two methods for the realisation of their hopes. Here, as on the Continent, there is no lack of thinkers with elaborate schemes which, in the opinion of their authors, would ensure universal happiness. But whereas the French philosophers, whom I have mentioned, had each his thousands of ardent disciples among the workmen, our theorists cannot count their disciples by dozens, and are therefore not worth taking into account. But Co-operation and Unionism are real forces, and to pass them over in silence would be to deprive this lecture of all practical value and interest for such an audience as I am addressing.

The first thing to be noticed about Co-operation is that the word is used for two very different things. There is the theory, and there is the practice. The theory, as you know, is that there should be no employer-class, that the workmen should divide the profits of production amongst themselves, and that whatever management is necessary should be done by salaried officers and Committees. Co-operation, however, in that sense, does not get beyond a theory. The noble-minded men who founded the celebrated mill at Rochdale did indeed for some years manage to put their principles in practice; but even their

own society at length fell away from them, and began to employ workmen who were not shareholders at the market-rate of wages; and I believe there is not in England, at the present moment, a single co-operative society in which workmen divide the profits irrespective of their being shareholders. Co-operation, in this sense, then, may be dismissed from consideration with as little ceremony as the Socialist and Communist theories before alluded to. Like them it supposes a degree of unselfishness and devotion which we do not find in average men, and it does not attempt to create those qualities, or supply their place by the only influence that can keep societies of men for any length of time to a high standard of morality—the influence of an organised religion.

The co-operation which actually exists, and is an important feature of modern industry, is something very different. We must strip it mercilessly of the credit it borrows from its name, and its supposed connection with the theory above described. It is nothing more than an extension of the joint-stock principle. In what respect does the Rochdale mill differ from any other joint-stock company? A considerable number of its shares are already held by persons who do not work in it, and it is very possible that in course of time all, or most of the workmen employed in it, will be earning simply the market-rate of wages. A certain number of men, by the exercise of industry, prudence, and frugality, will have risen from the working class into the class above? How is the working class the better for that? What sort of solution is that for the industrial problem? We set out with the inquiry how the working class was to be improved, not how a few persons, or even many persons, were to be enabled to get out of it. We want to discover how workmen may obtain a larger share of the profits of production, and the Rochdale Co-operative Mill, which pays workmen the market-rate, has certainly not made the discovery. The world is not to be regenerated by the old dogma of the economists masquerading in Socialist dress.

The history of Co-operation is this. The noble-minded men who first preached the theory in its purity, were deeply impressed with the immoral and mischievous way in which capital is too often employed by its possessors, and instead of inquir-

ing how moral influence might be brought to bear on capitalists, they leaped to the conclusion that capitalists, as a separate class, ought not to exist. In making this assumption they overlooked the distinction between the accidental and permanent conditions of industry. Collective activity among men has had two types—the military and the industrial, the latter of which has gradually almost superseded the former. Military organisation has undergone many and great changes, from the earliest shape in which we find it among savage tribes down to its most elaborate form in our own time. But its one leading characteristic has remained unchanged. There has never been a time when armies were not commanded by generals with great power and great responsibility. Wherever there has been the slightest attempt to weaken that power and diminish that responsibility, there it is admitted that the army has suffered and the work has been so much less efficiently done. Whether the soldiers were mere slaves as in Eastern countries, or free citizens as in the republics of Greece and Rome and America, or mercenaries fighting for hire as has often been the case in modern Europe, the principle of management has always been the same. Discipline was as sharp among the citizen soldiers of Grant and Sherman as among the conscripts of Frederick and Napoleon. Such a thing as the co-operative management of an army has never been heard of.

Now in the other type of collective activity—the industrial—a similar organisation has constantly prevailed. The analogy is striking, and it is not accidental, for the conditions are fundamentally the same. Fighting and working are the two great forms of activity, and if you have to organise them on a large scale, it is not strange that the same method should be found best for both. And workmen will do well to notice this analogy, and insist on pressing it home to the utmost of their power; for the more logically it is carried out, the more striking and overwhelming are the arguments it supplies for their side of the labour controversy. There is not a phase of that controversy which it does not illustrate, and invariably to their advantage. As one instance out of many, I may mention the sanction afforded by military practice for a uniform rate of wages to the rank-and-file of labour—an argument which was put by one of

the Trades' Union Inquiry Commissioners to the Secretary of the Master Builders' Association, and which completely shut his mouth on that question. But it is for another purpose that I am now referring to this analogy. Special skill and training, unity of purpose, promptitude, and occasionally, even secrecy, are necessary for a successful direction of industry just as much as of war. 'A council of war never fights' is a maxim which has passed into a proverb, as stamping the worthlessness of such councils. Yet councils of war are not composed of private soldiers, but of skilful and experienced officers. They are more analogous to our boards of railway directors, whose incapacity, I must admit, does not take exactly that form. Whether the efficiency of our railway management would be improved by an infusion of stokers and platelayers into the direction, I will leave it to the advocates of Co-operation to say.

Another no less important advantage of the old industrial system over Co-operation is that it transfers the risk from the workman to the employer. Capital is the reserved fund which enables the employer to carry on his business with due enterprise, and yet to give a steady rate of wages to the workman. Great as have been the changes through which industry has passed—slavery, serfdom, and free labour—this fundamental characteristic has remained unaltered. In all ages of the world, since industry began to be organised at all, the accumulated savings which we call capital have been in the hands of comparatively few persons, who have provided subsistence for the labourer while engaged in production. The employer has borne the risk and taken the profits. The labourer has had no risk and no share of the profits. Though in modern times there appears to be some desire on the part of the master to make the workman share the risk, he will soon come to see that such a policy destroys the only justification of capital, and thus strikes at the root of property itself. The workmen will help him to see this by their combinations, if he shows any indisposition to open his eyes. It is one among many ways in which they will teach him in spite of himself what is for his own good. In point of fact, in the best organised trade—that of the engineers—the rate of wages is subject to little, if any fluctuation.

The separation, then, between employers and employed,

between capitalist and labourer, is a natural and fundamental condition of society, characteristic of its normal state, no less than its preparatory stages. We may alter many things, but we shall not alter that. We may change our forms of government, our religions, our language, our fashion of dress, our cooking, but the relation of employer and employed is no more likely to be superseded in the future by Communism in any of its shapes, than is another institution much menaced at the present time—that of husband and wife. It suits human nature in a civilised state. Its aptitude to supply the wants of man is such that nothing can compete with it. There may be fifty ways of getting from Temple Bar to Charing Cross; but the natural route is by the Strand; and along the Strand the bulk of the traffic will always lie. And so, though we may have trifling exceptions, the great mass of workmen will always be employed by capitalists.

Now this was what the founders of Co-operation refused to see; and in their enthusiasm they fancied they could establish societies, the shareholders of which would voluntarily surrender to non-shareholders a large part of the profits which their capital would naturally command. But the shareholders were most of them only average men; they were not enthusiastic, or their enthusiasm cooled as the money-making habit crept over them. The Co-operative theory was not bound up with any religious system, or supported by any spiritual discipline; and they soon fell into the vulgar practice of making the most of their capital. What is the lesson to be learnt? Whatever there was of good in the movement belonged not to the industrial theory, but to the social spirit of the men who started it. If those men had been employers, or if any employers had had their spirit, the workmen would have reaped the same advantages without any machinery of Co-operation. Therefore we must look for improvement, not to this or that new-fangled industrial system, but to the creation of a moral and religious influence which may bend all in obedience to duty. When we have created such an influence, we shall find that it will act more certainly and effectually on a small body of capitalists than it would on a loose multitudinous mob of co-operative shareholders.

Before leaving the subject of Co-operation, let me say that,

while I cannot recognise its claims to be the true solution of the industrial question, I heartily acknowledge the many important services it may render to the working class. Even as applied to production, in which I contend it can never play an important part, it will do good for a time by throwing light on the profits of business. As applied to distribution in the shape, that is to say, of co-operative stores, its services can hardly be exaggerated. It not only increases the comfort of workmen, by furnishing them with genuine goods and making their money go further, but it gives them dignity and independence by emancipating them from a degrading load of debt. Moreover, it sets free, for the purpose of reproduction, a large amount of labour and capital which had before been wasted in a badly arranged system of distribution.

If we turn now to the other agency by which the labouring class in this country is being elevated, I mean Trades Unions, we shall find more enlightened ideas combined with greater practical utility. Unionism distinctly recognises the great cardinal truth which Co-operation shirks—namely, that workmen must be benefited as workmen, not as something else. It does not offer to any of them opportunities for raising themselves into little capitalists, but it offers to all an amelioration of their position. Co-operation is a fine thing for men who are naturally indefatigable, thrifty, and ambitious—not always the finest type of character, be it observed in passing—but it does nothing for the less energetic, for the men who take life easily, and are content to live and die in the station in which they were born. Yet these are just the men we want to elevate, for they form the bulk of the working class. They are in very bad odour with the preachers of the Manchester school, the apostles of self-help. To my mind there is not a more degrading cant than that which incessantly pours from the lips and pens of these wretched instructors. Men professing to be Christians, and very strict Christians too—Protestant Christians who have cleansed their faith of all mediæval corruptions and restored it according to the primitive model of apostolic times (when we are told, ‘all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need’)—these teachers, I say, are not

ashamed to talk of making money and getting on in the world, as if it were the whole duty of a working man. Thus it comes to pass, that while they are bitter opponents and calumniators of Unionism,¹ they patronise Co-operation, because it enables their model workman to raise himself, as Lord Shaftesbury expressed it not long ago, '*into a good and even affluent citizen*', a moral elevation to which it is clear a primitive Christian never attained. But you who are workmen, and have a little practical experience of the thing, you do not want me or anyone else to tell you that the men who raise themselves from the ranks are very often not distinguished by fine dispositions or even by great abilities. What is wanted for success of that sort is industry, perseverance, and a certain sharpness, often of a low kind. I am far from saying that those who raise themselves are not often admirable men; but you know very well that they are sometimes very much the reverse—that they are morally very inferior to the average workman who is content with his position, and only desires that his work may be regular and his wages fair. Now the merit of Unionism is that it meets the case of this average workman. Instead of addressing itself to the sharp, shifty men, who are pretty certain to take care of themselves in any case, it undertakes to do the best that can be done for the average man. And not only so, but it attends to the man below the average in industry and worthiness: it finds him work, and insists on his working; it fortifies his good resolutions; it strengthens him against temptation; it binds him to his fellows;—in short, it regulates him generally, and looks after him. Nor is even this the full extent of the difference in this respect between Co-operation and Unionism. While the benefits of the former are exclusively reaped by shareholders, the unions wins its victories in the interest of non-unionists just as much as of its own members.

I noticed as a fatal error of Co-operation that it regards the

¹ 'God grant that the work-people may be emancipated from the tightest thralldom they have ever yet endured. All the single despots, and all the aristocracies that ever were or will be, are as puffs of wind compared with these tornadoes of Trades' Unions. But I have small hope. The masses seem to me to have less common-sense than they had a year ago.'—Letter of Lord Shaftesbury to Colonel Maude.

relation of employer and employed as a transient and temporary arrangement which may and will be superseded, whereas it is permanent, and destined to survive all attacks. It is an eminent merit of Unionism that it recognises this important truth. The practical good sense of workmen has here shown itself superior to all the cleverness of philosophers. They have instinctively grasped the maxim that we shall best serve the cause of progress, whether political or social, by striving not to displace the actual possessors of power, but to teach them to use their power for the interests of society.¹ And there is this further advantage of a practical kind, that Unionism is not obliged, like the schemes of the philosophers, to hover impotently in the air, as a mere speculative phantom, till such time as it can command the assistance of the State to get itself tried in practice. A few dozen men can commence the application of it in their own trade any day they please. Nor is it a cut-and-dried scheme in which every detail is settled beforehand with mathematical exactness; it is of infinite elasticity, and can adapt itself spontaneously to the circumstances of each case.

It is desirable that the workman's wages should be good, but it is still more desirable that they should be steady. A fluctuating income in any station of life is, as everyone knows, one of the most demoralising influences to which a man can be exposed. When an outcry is raised against the unions because they maintain that wages ought not to fall with every temporary depression of trade, it always seems to me that in so doing they are discharging precisely their most useful function. I have already alluded to the duty of the capitalists in this respect, and Unionism supplies exactly the machinery required for keeping him up to his duty, until a religious influence shall have been organised which will produce the same result in a more healthy and normal way. No doubt unions might offend deplorably on their side against this principle of a steady rate of wages. It is conceivable that they might screw out of the employer every year or every month wages to such an amount as would leave him only the bare profit which would make it worth his while to continue in business. It is manifest that on those terms he could not amass such a reserve fund as would enable him to tide over

¹ Comte, *General View of Positivism*, p. 120, 2nd (English) edition.

temporary depression without reducing wages. Every fluctuation in trade would cause a corresponding fluctuation in wages, which would vary from month to month. If Trades Unions were to act in this way they would lose their principal justification. They are charged with doing so now, but the charge is perfectly groundless. Probably in no case do they extract from the employer anything like the wages he could afford to give if he was disposed. I do not believe that unions, extend them as you will, will ever be strong enough to put such a pressure on the employers. I believe that an organised religious influence will hereafter induce employers to concede to their men, voluntarily, a larger share of their profits than any Trades Union could extort from them. An additional security that unions will never go too far in this direction is to be found in the fact that some masters, whether from larger capital, greater business ability, or higher reputation, make much larger profits than others. But unions do not pretend to exact higher wages from such masters. The tariff, therefore, is evidently ruled by the profits of the least successful employers.

It might have been supposed at first sight that employers would have looked with more favour on Unionism, which leaves them in full possession of their capital, their authority, and their responsibility, than on Co-operation, which proposes to supersede them altogether. But, as you all know, the contrary is the case; and there could not be a more instructive test of the relative efficiency of the two methods. Unionism maintains that capital has its duties, and must be used for a social purpose. Co-operation shrinks from asserting a doctrine so distasteful to the propertied classes, and seeks to evade the necessity for it by the shallow fallacy that everyone is to become a capitalist. Although everyone will not become a capitalist, no doubt some will, and the net result of the co-operative movement will be that the army of capitalists will be considerably reinforced in its lower ranks. Will that army so reinforced be more easy to deal with? An exaggerated and superstitious reverence for the rights of property, and an indifference to its duties, is the chief obstacle to the elevation of the working class. The fewer the possessors in whose hands capital is concentrated, the more easy will it be to educate, discipline, and, if need be, gently

coerce them. But when the larger capitalists have at their back an army of little capitalists, men who have sunk the co-operative workman in the co-operative shareholder, men who have invested their three or four hundred pounds in the concern, and are employing their less fortunate fellow-workmen at the market rate of wages, why, it stands to reason that the capital of the country will be less amenable to discipline than ever. A striking example is to be seen in France at the present time. You know that the immediate effects of the old revolution was to put the cultivators in possession of the soil. A vast number of small proprietors were created. Doubtless many advantages resulted from that change. France got rid of her aristocracy once and for good. The cultivators identified themselves with the revolution which had given them the soil, and defended it fiercely against the banded sovereigns of Europe. If the people had not been bribed with the land, the revolution might have been crushed. But there has been another result from it, of more doubtful advantage. The whole of this class of small proprietors is fanatically devoted to the idea of property; and in their fear that property should be attacked they have thrown their weight on the side of conservatism, and against further political and social progress. The wealthy middle class plays on their ignorance and timidity. All who desire to initiate the smallest social reform, who express any opinion adverse to the tyrannical power exercised by capital, are denounced as Communists and apostles of confiscation. The small proprietors are worked up into a frenzy of apprehension, and fling themselves into the arms of any crafty imposter who talks big words about saving society. Thus the artisans and small proprietors, men whose interests must be essentially the same, for they are all alike workmen living by the sweat of their brow and the labour of their hands, are pitted against one another, and the middle class alone profits by the dissension. If the manufacturers of this country were to get into the hands of a number of small shareholders, simple workmen would soon find the rein tighter and the load heavier. Their demand for the repeal of unjust laws would encounter a more stubborn resistance; the progress they have been making towards comfort and dignity would be abruptly checked. Fortunately, as I have already endeavoured

to show, there is no likelihood that so-called Co-operation will ever drive the capitalist employer out of the field.

Such are the reasons for which I hold Unionism to be by far the most efficient of all the agencies that have as yet been largely advocated or put in practice for the purpose of elevating the working class, and preparing it for its future destinies. The French workmen have much to teach us; but I think in this matter they might take a lesson from our men with advantage. I hope they will signalise their next revolution—for which, by the way, I am getting rather impatient—by abolishing all those laws which so iniquitously obstruct their right to combine. Indeed, Unionism cannot be said to have had a fair trial in England until it is established in the other countries of Europe also.

It remains to consider what the destinies are for which our workmen are thus preparing themselves, and to picture to ourselves what their condition will be when society shall approximate more nearly to its normal state. We may do so without indulging in Utopias or extravagant estimates of our capacity to shape the course of human development, because we are not postulating springs of action in individuals, which, as a matter of fact, do not exist, or do not exist in sufficient strength—we are not spinning theories out of *à priori* notions of what society ought to be, but we are feeling our way by an examination, on the one hand, of the permanent facts of our nature, and the conditions imposed upon us by the external world; and, on the other hand, of the steady, continuous progress of society in the past. And if it has occurred to anyone that I have been a long time coming to what professed to be the subject of this lecture—namely, ‘the *future* of the working class’—I must plead in justification, that I have in effect been dealing with it all along, and that nothing now remains but to give some practical illustrations of the conclusions already arrived at.

That the position of the workmen will ever be as desirable as that of the wealthier classes seems, as far as we can see, highly improbable. Some people are shocked when such a proposition is plainly enunciated. They have a sort of hazy idea that the external conditions of our existence cannot be inconsistent with the perfection and happiness of man. They have been taught

that this is a world where only *man* is vile, and it sounds to them immoral to talk as if there was any insurmountable obstacle to an ideal state of society except what they are accustomed to term our fallen nature. The fact is, however, that this is very far from being the best of all possible worlds, and we must look that fact in the face. Human society might arrive much nearer perfection, both moral and material, if there was not so much hard work to be done. It *must* be done by some; and those to whom it falls to do it will inevitably have a less pleasant life than others. But though to annul or entirely alter the influences of the world external to ourselves is beyond our humble powers, we can generally either modify them to some extent, or, what comes to the same thing, modify ourselves to suit them, if only successive generations of men address themselves wisely to the task; just as an individual may by care preserve his health in a pestilential climate, though he can do little or nothing to alter that climate. And so, though there will probably always be much to regret in the workman's lot, we may look forward to improvements which will give him a considerable amount of comfort and happiness. I will enumerate some of these which we may reasonably expect will be reached when present struggles are over, and when employers and workmen alike have learnt to shape their lives and conduct by the precepts of a rational religion.

Employers, though exercising their own judgment and free action in their industrial enterprises, will never forget that their first concern must be, not the acquisition of an enormous fortune, but the well-being and comfort of the labourers dependent on them. Hence there will be an end of that reckless speculation which sports with the happiness, and even the life, of workmen and their families—displacing them here, massing them there, treating them, in short, as mere food for powder in the reckless conflicts of industrial competition. We shall no longer see periods of spasmodic energy and frantic over-production first in one trade, then in another, followed by glutted markets, commercial depression, and cessation of employment. For capital being concentrated in comparatively few hands, it will be possible to employ it with wisdom and foresight for the general good; which is quite out of the question while the chieftains of

industry are a disorganised multitude, swaying to and fro in the markets of the world as blindly and irrationally as a street-mob at a fire. Thus the workman will be able to count on what is more precious to him than anything else—steady employment, and an income which, whether large or small, is, at all events, liable to little fluctuation. The demoralising effects of uncertainty in this respect can hardly be overrated. Large numbers of workmen at present, from no fault of their own, lead as feverish and reckless an existence as the gambler. When this state of things ceases, we may look forward with confidence to a remarkable development of social and domestic virtue among the working class.

To give the workman due independence, he ought to be the owner of his abode, or, at all events, to have a lease of it. In some instances at present we find men living in houses belonging to their employers, from which they can be ejected at a week's notice. This is often the case among colliers and agricultural labourers, and what grinding tyranny results from it, I need not tell you. It is not desirable in a healthy industrial society that labour should be migratory. Ordinarily, the workman will continue in the same place, and with the same employer, for long periods, just as is the habit with other classes. Fixity of abode will naturally accompany fixity of wages and employment. Here, again, we may expect an admirable reaction on social and domestic morality.

A diminution of the hours of work is felt by all the best workmen to be even more desirable than an increase of wages. All of you, I am sure, have so thoroughly considered this question in all its bearings, that I am dispensed from dwelling on it at length. I merely mention it that it may not be supposed I undervalue it. If the working day could be fixed at eight hours for six days in the week, and a complete holiday on the seventh, the workman would have time to educate himself, to enjoy himself, and, above all, to see more of his family.

Let us next consider how far the State can intervene to render the position of the workman more tolerable. That ought to be the first and highest object of the State, and therefore we need have no scruples about taxing the other classes of the community to any extent for this purpose, provided we can really

accomplish it.¹ But of course it must be borne in mind that by injudicious action in this direction we might easily defeat our own benevolent intentions. For instance, it is conceivable that such taxation might become so heavy as to approximate in effect to the establishment of Communism, and the springs of industry and frugality, in other words the creation of capital, would be proportionately affected. Again, the State must not afford help to workmen in such shape as directly or indirectly to encourage on the one hand idleness, and on the other a reckless increase of the population. For example, it must not interfere to lower the price of food or houses; because common sense and experience alike show us that such interference would rapidly pauperise the class it was intended to benefit. But there are, I believe, many ways in which it may add most materially to the comfort and happiness of the poor without at all relieving them from the necessity of exercising prudence and industry. As regards their physical comfort, it may carry out sanitary regulations on a scale hitherto not dreamt of. It may furnish them in London, and other large towns, with a copious supply of good water free of expense. It may provide medical assistance much more liberally than at present. I would add, it may exercise a close supervision over the weights and measures of the shopkeepers and the quality of the goods they supply, did I not hope that the spread of co-operative stores may render such supervision unnecessary. The State may also do much to make the lives of the poor brighter and happier. It may place education within their reach; it may furnish an adequate supply of free libraries, museums, and picture galleries; it may provide plenty of excellent music in the parks and other public places on Sunday and summer evenings.

I think that a London workman in steady employment,

¹ As I have had some experience of the criticism (always anonymous) which seizes a detached passage and draws from it inferences directly excluded by the context, I desire by anticipation to protest against any quotation of the above sentence apart from at least the three which immediately succeed it. Taken by itself (although even so it is guarded by a strictly adequate proviso), it might be misunderstood. In the context the proviso is carefully and fully expanded into an argument on social grounds against excessive taxation of the rich. Arguments from the individualist point of view I entirely reject, as I trust my audience did.

earning such wages as he does now, working eight hours a day, living in his own house, and with such means of instruction and amusement as I have described gratuitously afforded him, would not have an intolerable lot. His position would, it is true, be less brilliant than that of his employer. But it does not follow that the lot of the latter would be so very much more desirable. His income, of course, will be lessened in proportion as his workmen receive a larger share of the profits of production. He will live in greater luxury and elegance than they do, but within limits; for public opinion, guided by religious discipline, will not tolerate the insolent display of magnificence which at present lends an additional bitterness to the misery of the poor. His chief pleasure will consist, like that of the statesman, in the noble satisfaction of administering the interests of the industrial group over which he presides. But the responsibilities of this position will be so heavy, the anxiety and the strain on the mind so severe, that incompetent men will generally be glad to take the advice that will be freely given them, namely, to retire from it to some humbler occupation. The workmen, on the other hand, will lead a tranquil life, exempt from all serious anxiety; and although their position will be less splendid than that of the employers, it will not be less dignified. For in that future to which I look forward, the pressure of public opinion, directed, as I have several times said, by an organised religion, will not tolerate any idle class living by the sweat of others, and affecting to look down on all who have to gain their own bread. Every man, whether he is rich or poor, will be obliged to work regularly and steadily in some way or other as a duty to society; and when all work, the false shame which the industrious now feel in the presence of the idle will disappear for ever. I am addressing an audience, which, whether it calls itself Republican or not, has, I am sure, a thoroughly Republican spirit, and a keen sense of the insolent contempt with which labour is regarded by those whose circumstances exempt them from performing it. You will therefore agree with me that of all the changes in the workman's condition which I have enumerated as likely to be utilised in the future, this is by far the most precious—that his function will be invested with as much dignity as that of any other citizen who is doing his duty to society.

There are some men who are inclined to be impatient when they are asked to contemplate a state of things which confessedly will not be of immediate realisation. They are burning for an immediate reformation of all wrongs in their own time. They think it very poor work to talk of a golden age which is to bless the world long after they are dead, buried, and forgotten. They are even inclined to resent any attempt to interest them in it, as though dictated by a concealed desire to divert them from practical exertions. 'Tell us,' they say, 'how *we* may taste some happiness. Why should we labour in the cause of progress if the fruits are to be reaped only by posterity?'

I do not wish to speak harshly of workmen who have this feeling. There has been too much of such hypocritical preaching in times past, and it is not strange if they have become suspicious of exhortations to fix their eyes on a remote future rather than on the present. So conspicuously unjust is their treatment by the more powerful classes, so hard and painful is the monotonous round of their daily life, that the wonder is, not that some men should rebel against it, but that most should bear it with calmness and resignation. Nevertheless, it is necessary to say firmly, and never to cease saying, that such language as I have alluded to belongs to a low morality. Moreover, it defeats its own object. For whatever may be the case with individuals, the people will not be stimulated to united action by arguments addressed to its selfishness. The people can only be moved to enthusiasm by an appeal to elevated sentiments. If leaders of the worst causes find it necessary to invest them with some derisive semblance of virtue that may touch the popular heart, shall we who have put our hand to the sacred task of helping and accelerating social progress, shall we deal in cynical sophisms and play on selfish passions? We owe it to our race that we should leave this world in a better state than we found it. We must labour for posterity, because our ancestors laboured for us. What sacrifices have we to make compared with some that have been made for us? We are not called on to go to the gallows with John Brown and George William Gordon, the latest martyrs in the cause of labour; or to mount barricades, like the workmen who flung away their lives in Paris twenty years ago next month. Is their spirit extinct? Were they men of

different mould from us? Or did they enter upon that terrible struggle on some calculation of their personal advantage? No! but so short a time had wrought them up to an heroic enthusiasm which made it seem a light thing to pour out their blood if they might inaugurate a happier future for their class. And shall we who live in times less stormy, but not less critical for the cause of labour, shall we complain if the fruits of such small sacrifices as we may make are reserved for another generation?

The worst of this unworthy spirit is, that the exhibition of it is an excuse to the self-indulgent and frivolous for their neglect of all serious thought and vigorous action. One is sometimes ready to despair of any good coming out of a populace which can fill so many public-houses and low music-halls; which demands such dull and vulgar rubbish in its newspapers; which devours the latest news from Newmarket, and stakes its shillings and pots of beer as eagerly as a duke or marquis puts on his thousands. This multitude, so frivolous and gross in its tastes, will not be regenerated by plying it with fierce declamation against the existing order of society. You will more easily move it by appealing to its purer feelings, obscured but not extinct, than by taunting it with a base submission to class injustice. The man whose ideas of happiness do not go much beyond his pipe and glass and comic song, knows that the sour, envious agitator will never be a bit the better off for all the troubles he gives himself; and he sees nothing to gain by following in his steps. But there are few men so gross as not to be capable of feeling the beauty of devotion to the good of others, even when they are morally too weak to put it in practice. And though a man may lead an unsatisfactory life, it is something if, so far as his voice contributes to the formation of public opinion, it is heard on the right side. This is the ground we must take if we wish to raise the tone of workmen. We must place before them, without reserve, the highest motive of political and social action—the good of those who are to come after us. We must hold out no prospect of individual advantage or reward other than the approval of their own consciences.

Those who complain most bitterly of the slow rate of progress towards an improved industrial state, would sometimes do well to reflect whether their own conduct does not contribute to


retard it. The selfish spirit follows us even into our labours for others, and takes the form of vanity and ambition. Probably all of us have had frequent occasion to observe how the cause of labour has suffered from ignoble jealousies and personal rivalries. Yet it is the greatest spirits who are invariably most ready to take the subordinate position and to accept obscurity with a noble satisfaction. The finest type of theocratic government, the lawgiver of the Hebrew nation, was ready to be blotted out of God's book so that the humblest and lowest, the rank-and-file of his people, might enter the promised land. The greatest of the apostles wished that he himself might be accursed from Christ, if at that price he might purchase salvation for an obscure mob of Jews. 'Reputation,' said the hero of the French Revolution, 'what is that? Blighted be my name, but let France be free.' So speaks a Moses, a Paul, or a Danton, while petty ambitions are stickling for precedence, and posturing before the gaze of their contemporaries. Devotion, forgetfulness of self, a readiness to obey rather than an eagerness to command—if a man has not these qualities he is but common clay, he is not fit to lead his fellows. Let us school ourselves into a readiness not merely to storm the breach, but to lie down in the trench, that others may pass over our bodies as over a bridge to victory. It is a spirit which has never been found wanting whenever there has been a great cause to call it forth; and a greater cause than that of the workmen of Europe advancing to their final emancipation, this world is not likely to see again.

THE LOCKOUT OF THE BUILDING OPERATIVES IN LONDON.

FELLOW WORKMEN—Never consent to resume work until this Odious Document is unconditionally withdrawn.

COUNTER STUMP.

AGREEMENT.

<p>No. 36.</p> <p>Name: HENRY NOBLE,</p> <p>Dated August 18th, 1859,</p> <p>Initials of Foreman } G. W. or Clerk } (Geo. Wales)</p>		<p>No. 36.</p> <p>I declare that I AM NOT now, nor will I during the continuance of my engagement with you, become a MEMBER OF OR SUPPORT ANY SOCIETY which directly or indirectly interferes with the arrangements of this or any other Establishment, or THE HOURS OR TERMS OF LABOUR, and that I recognise the right of Employers and Employed individually TO MAKE ANY TRADE ENGAGEMENTS ON WHICH THEY MAY CHOOSE TO AGREE.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Dated 18th of August, 1859.</p>
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By order of the Committee, GEO. POTTER, Secretary.

THE 'ODIOUS' DOCUMENT

Main Personalities and Events

ALLAN, William, 1813–1874. General Secretary of the Journeymen Steam Engine Makers Society—the parent body of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers of which Allan was General Secretary from 1851 to 1874. Prominent in the Labour Representation League. Born in Ulster of Scots parentage. Became a cotton piecer at age 12. Married at 19, he became an engineer in Liverpool, then at Crewe, where he joined his union. Was the originator of 'New Model' Trades Unions and a member of the Junta.

APPLEGARTH, Robert, 1833–1925. Carpenter. General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners 1862–1871. Member of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association. Started work at age 11 as errand boy then became an unapprenticed carpenter. Was member of the Junta 1867–1871. Member of the Royal Commission on the Contagious Diseases Act, 1871. On resigning from his union secretaryship he became a journalist then a foreman of an engineering firm and finally its proprietor.

BEEHIVE, The. Principal trades union and working-class journal from 1861 to 1877. George Potter was the editor and virtual proprietor throughout. Most trade union leaders of the period contributed articles making it an important source for trades union history. Copies of the early issues are extremely rare. Even the British Museum does not have a complete set.

In 1877 *The Beehive* changed its name to *Industrial Review* which lasted only until 1879.

BEESLY, Edward Spencer, 1831–1915. Professor at University College, London. Presided at the inaugural meeting of the International Working Men's Association in 1864. Consistent defender of the principles of Trades Unionism and supporter of political action by the Unions. Took an active part in the 1867 reform movement.

COULSON, Edwin, –1893. General Secretary of the Operative Bricklayers' Society (London Order). Member of the Junta. According to the Webbs 'possessed administrative ability of no mean order'.

DOCUMENT, The. This has appeared on many occasions in Trades Union history. It is an undertaking to leave or not to join a trade union. First appeared after the numerous strikes which marked the formation of Robert Owen's Consolidated Trade Union of 1834. The employers, in many cases, refused to take on workers who did not give this undertaking. Such an undertaking has ever since been known in trades union history as 'The Document'. (*For an example of the 'Document' used in the builders' lock-out of 1859 see page 175.*)

EDUCATION ACT, 1870. Under this Act, Education was first recognised as a public service. Existing Church schools received increased grants and the Act empowered locally elected Boards to establish schools in all areas, maintained in part by local rates. The Act laid the basis for compulsory, free, elementary education for all children. School attendance became compulsory in 1880 while all fees in elementary schools were abolished in 1891.

GUILE, Daniel, 1814–1883. Corresponding Secretary of the Ironfounders Union from 1863 to 1881. Member of the Junta. Son of a shoemaker, was apprenticed to an iron-founder at age 13. First joined a union in 1834. Described by the Webbs as 'a man of attractive personality and winning manner gifted with a certain rugged eloquence'.

HARRISON, Frederic, 1831–1923. Lawyer, writer on philosophy and social questions. Founded the Positivist Society, 1870. Member of the International Working Men's Association. Educated at Kings College School and Wadham College, Oxford. Member of the Royal Commission on Trades Unions, 1867 and its legal adviser. Was the main inspiration of trades union law between 1868 and 1906. His fight for trades union rights more or less enforced his early retirement from legal practice and he took to writing. He published numerous books of a literary-historical nature and at the age of 80 he wrote his 'Autobiographic Memoirs'.

HORNBY v. CLOSE CASE. In this famous case, the Boilermakers' Society sued its Bradford Treasurer for £24 which he owed them. Believing that the Friendly Societies Act of 1855 protected trades union funds as well as those of Friendly Societies, they were astounded at the judgment of the Lord Chief Justice to the effect that trades unions were outside the scope of this act and were regarded as illegal organisations before the law.

HUGHES, Thomas, 1822–1896. Christian Socialist. Famous as the author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. While a lawyer he came under the influence of F. D. Maurice, who was, together with Charles Kingsley, a leading Christian Socialist. Was Principal of the Working Men's College in Great Ormond Street after Maurice's death. Was M.P. from 1865 to 1874 and a member of the Royal Commission of Trades Unions, 1867. On one of his visits to America in 1879 he started a co-operative settlement in Tennessee. Was Chairman of the first Co-operative Congress in England, 1869.

JUNTA, The. The name given by the Webbs to the small group of London union secretaries who together controlled the affairs of a large section of the trade union movement—particularly the unions catering for the more skilled and better paid workers. Foremost in the group were William Allan and Robert Applegarth. Others were Daniel Guile, Edwin Coulson and George Odger. The main aim of the Junta was to obtain

for the unions a recognised status in the community both politically and socially. The Junta wanted the trades unions to see beyond narrow, sectional interests, beyond strikes and disputes, to the broader issues of social and political reform. The present position of the T.U.C. with its wide interest in all matters concerning the working-classes owes much to the ideas of the Junta a hundred years ago.

KANE, John, 1819-1876. Ironworker. Chartist. Worked to organise the ironworkers into a trade union in 1842. First General Secretary of the Amalgamated Ironworkers' Association from 1868 to 1876. Born in Northumberland he began work at age 7, becoming an ironworker at 15. Worked closely with the Junta and was usually a supporter of their views.

LONDON TRADES COUNCIL. Formed on July 10th 1860. At first it represented only the smaller trade societies but soon the Amalgamated Societies joined in and by 1864 it was completely in the control of the Junta. The Webbs called its meetings 'an informal cabinet of the Trade Union world'. During the period covered by this book the Council showed its ability not only to intervene effectively in trades union affairs but concerned itself also in a wide range of social and political questions affecting trades unionists both nationally and internationally. The London Trades Council maintained close contact by correspondence and personal visits with Trades Councils in provincial towns. George Odger was secretary from 1862 to 1872.

MACDONALD, Alexander, 1821-1881. Miner. President of the National Union of Miners from its formation in 1863 until 1881. Liberal M.P. for Stafford 1874, becoming with Thomas Burt the first of the *Lib-Labs*. Member of the Royal Commission on Labour Laws. Son of a sailor, he began working in the pit at age 8. By his own efforts he entered Glasgow University in 1846 while still active as a miners' leader. He was a school-master from 1850 to 1857 abandoning this to continue working for the miners. He proposed to write a history of the coal-miners which was never completed.

ODGER, George, 1820–1877. Shoemaker. Prominent member of the Ladies Shoemakers' Society. Secretary, London Trades Council from 1862 to 1872. A member of the Junta. President of the International Working-men's Association 1864–67 and member of its General Council 1864–71. Was son of a Cornish miner. First became prominent during the building-trades lock-out in 1859. Tried unsuccessfully five times to become an M.P. His funeral in 1877 was attended by thousands of London working-men.

POTTER, George, 1832–1893. Carpenter. One of the leaders of the Amalgamated Union of Building Workers. Member of the London Trades Council. President of London Working-men's Association. Founder, Editor and publisher of *The Beehive* newspaper. Potter was the main challenger to the leadership of the Junta and since he had considerable rank-and-file support his importance should not be underestimated. Potter was one of the two London delegates to attend the first T.U.C. in Manchester, 1868. In 1869 a reconciliation was achieved between Potter and the Junta and three members of the latter joined the managing committee of the *Beehive*.

REFORM ACT, 1867. This was the second Reform Act, the first being in 1832. It was carried through by the Conservatives under Lord Derby and Disraeli. There was a further redistribution of seats and a million town labourers were added to the electorate. This enabled the trades unions to exercise a greater influence upon politics than in any previous period. Dissatisfaction with the Liberal and Conservative parties led to a demand for an independent Labour Party.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON TRADES UNIONS, 1867. Was set up by the Government chiefly at the request of the trades unions themselves to enquire into the whole subject of trade unionism following the public outcry over the 'Sheffield outrages' (see below). The Junta succeeded in getting two friendly commissioners appointed (Thomas Hughes and Frederic Harrison). The trades union representatives conducted their case with great skill, and what was intended as an attack on

trades unionism ended by being a justification of their existence. Two reports were issued by the Commission. Both were in favour of the legalisation of trades unions. The majority report insisted that trades union rules were free of any restrictive clauses. The minority report (signed by Harrison, Hughes and the Earl of Lichfield) proposed the removal of all legal discriminations against unions and became the basis of the Trade Union Act of 1871 introduced by Gladstone's government.

SHEFFIELD 'OUTRAGES'. The Sheffield 'Outrages' of 1866 were the last of a long series of violent acts directed against non-unionists in the cutlery trades in Sheffield. Non-unionists had their tools removed, were occasionally beaten up or their houses attacked and damaged. In October 1866 a workman's house was blown up by a home-made bomb. The local and national press, rarely friendly to trades unions, used the outrages as a means of attacking the whole trades union movement. The Royal Commission on Trades Unions of 1867 was appointed as a result. It promised an indemnity to the culprits if they confessed and gave full information, which they did. It became clear in the course of the Commission's hearings that these acts were the work of a tiny minority and were not typical of trades unions as a whole.

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